

EMMA ROBINSON
& DONALD SWEN

YOUTH HOMELESSNESS



A Letter from Your Facilitators

Welcome to Take a Break: Youth Homelessness!

We are so excited that all of you have been accepted to our trip. This whole experience is going to be like none other – it's going to be great.

This program is going to be an in depth exploration of the social issue that is youth homelessness. We will collectively explore topics that include what it's like to be young and experiencing homelessness, how it can have lasting impacts on an individual's life, how it affects everybody in society, what solutions are being done to alleviate its wide spread nature and last but not least, what we, as college students, can do about it.

So, full discloser. A lot of these articles are going to be interesting, but some may also be dry. Please know that we have selected these articles with many hours of thought put into each, and think they hold the most relevant and important information for all of you to understand. If you have a hard time understanding a concept or have critiques on an article please bring it up in our meetings, where we can all talk it through together.

Please know that there are many, many reasons for why a young individual can be experiencing homelessness, and given our time we certainly won't be able to talk about all of them in depth. That is why we have included an Index with two items: an article on the state of homelessness in Seattle, and chart we created which covers the most common reasons for why a young individual can be young and homeless. Feel free to read them if you have the time, they aren't long.

We also want you to know that although we both participated in the Youth Homelessness trip last year and have worked very hard to put all of this information together, we are by no means experts on this topic. We will be learning alongside you, and look forward to it every step of the way.

That being said, please don't hesitate to ask us any question you can think of. Even if we can't answer them, we are more than happy to try our best to find someone who can.

Cheers,

Emma & Donald

Extra Notes

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Chapter 1:

What is Youth Homelessness?



Home is Where You Draw Strength and Rest: The Meanings of Home for Houseless Young People

Sean A. Kidd and Josh D. Evans

Abstract

This qualitative study examined the meanings ascribed to the construct “home” by 208 youths defined by mainstream society as “homeless”. Youth narratives on the topic of home ranged across a continuum with home as state at one end (i.e., home is a state of mind, comprised of one’s friends) and home as place at the other (i.e., home as a physical dwelling). Youths employing the former meanings had typically been on the street for longer periods and identified with counterculture-type ideologies. For youths who defined home as place, home was constructed in direct opposition to street experiences. For both of these groups, control emerged as a central theme in their narratives. The implications of these findings for engaging youth and goal setting regarding exiting the streets are described.

Keywords: home, homeless, homeless youth, street youth

“We shape our dwellings, and afterwards our dwellings shape us.” - Winston Churchill, 1943

“I Guess I Just Said Something Ignorant, Right?”

The credit for this article belongs to a 16-year-old girl that I (Kidd) met at an alternative high school in New York City. In my months there I had seen her around a fair bit. She was one of the few girls who wore the more typically male version of street wear (e.g., baggy pants, big white T-shirt, ball cap) and tended to give me “sizing you up” types of looks when we passed one another. I had assumed that she didn’t fit criteria for the study (i.e., lived with her family) because she never volunteered to participate and hadn’t been mentioned by a staff person. One afternoon, while I was cramming for a licensure exam between interviews, she came into the office and sat down. She confirmed that I was the “interview guy” and asked to take part in the study, explaining that she had avoided taking part because she didn’t like the idea of talking about her life with a stranger. It was an interview that was immediately off to a bad start. I said something about doing research with homeless people. She became cold and distant, sat back, and looked at me with obvious dislike. I immediately stopped: “I guess I just said something ignorant, right?” As is often the case, admitting ignorance broke the ice

and she explained that calling her homeless was wrong. Homeless meant a lack of connections and valued place in terms of physical space, in family and in community. She felt that she had a home and had fought extremely hard to find a sense of home. She experienced my calling her homeless as an oppressive kind of action, an action that took something away from her. It was this conversation with her that led me to interrogate my use of the term “homeless” and, shortly thereafter, largely abandon it in all of my interactions with both youth and adult individuals who did not have a consistent residence in a house or apartment. In this article I sought to extend this interrogation, inviting others to participate and, given the limitations of my discipline in examining such constructs, have collaborated with a geographer who has likewise had experience working with this group.

Meanings of Home

- A dwelling-place, house, abode; the fixed residence of a family or household; the seat of domestic life and interests; one’s own house; the dwelling in which one habitually lives, or which one regards as one’s proper abode.
- The place of one’s dwelling or nurturing, with the conditions, circumstances, and feelings which naturally and properly attach to it, and are associated with it . . . but it appears also to be connected with the generalized or partly abstract sense, which includes not merely “place” but also “state,” and is thus construed like youth, wedlock, health, and other nouns of state.
- A place, region, or state to which one properly belongs, in which one’s affections centre, or where one finds refuge, rest, or satisfaction. (Oxford English Dictionary, 2007)

Home is a multidimensional concept (Hollander, 1991; Mallett, 2004) that involves an interaction between something physical/spatial and a place where various personal relationships and social institutions are lived out. Home is construed as a haven, an ideal, a refuge, and a place of retreat that exists almost interchangeably with the concept of family and is closely linked with notions of self-identity (Blunt, 2005). The association of home with a private residence such as a house is itself entrenched within a stratified hierarchy of dwelling types beginning with the rental apartment at the bottom, the privately owned, detached single-family house at the top, and a range of accommodation types in the middle (Veness, 1992). This hierarchy of housing accommodation is in essence a gradient of valued places within the moral imagination, the accommodation types at the bottom being the least able to offer a home and the valorized types at the top being the most homelike and able to provide a sense of “homeliness.” In contrast with predominant Western notions of home being closely tied with physical structures, among nomadic and Indigenous peoples home is more frequently associated with the land and spaces in nature in which camps are set up, with less differentiation from the concept of the “outside” world (Mallett, 2004). Meanings holding less association with physical structure are

likewise held among traveling persons. For those who travel extensively or for lengthy periods, home is a point of reference; something one has come from and something one is going toward (Mallett, 2004). For such persons, home can be both a part of the self and a space where the true and unique self can be expressed and lived.

Meanings of Homelessness

Examination and definition of the meanings of homelessness typically revolve around representations of the adult homeless individual. In the public imagination, homelessness is typically associated with the absence of fixed, regular, and adequate housing (Snow & Anderson, 1993). It is important to note that this categorization of homelessness is a social construction. It is dependent on culturally idealized understandings of home, ones that presuppose various types of physical structures considered suitable or acceptable as homes (Kearns & Smith, 1994; Veness, 1992). While superficially suggesting a lack of housing, homelessness serves as a point of social and moral reference (Wardough, 1999). In this context, the term “homeless” carries with it a stigmatizing set of beliefs and values (i.e., personal, moral, and social failure) rivaling even the most extreme sources of stigma (e.g., mental illness; Phelan, Link, Moore, & Stueve, 1997). The power of the label is traceable to the centrality of domesticity in western culture and the multiple ways in which conventional definitions of “homelessness” are inhabited by normative definitions of home (Veness, 1993). A number of ethnographic studies have examined the strategies and tactics used by unhoused adults to establish “alternative domesticities” (Datta, 2005), which serve as modalities for reconstructing meaningful, dignified lives in light of ongoing dislocation and dispossession (Desjarlais, 1997; Hopper, 2003; Rowe & Wolch, 1990; Ruddick, 1996; Snow & Anderson, 1993). These studies have emphasized how the homeless stitch together “homeless identities” (i.e., self-redefinition) through alternative versions of “homemaking,” accomplished largely through their tactical use and inhabitation of public spaces, their reliance on social networks and their identification with distinct subcultures (Rowe & Wolch, 1990; Veness, 1993). In establishing these alternative ways of living, the homeless not only challenge mainstream definitions of home as a permanent, fixed residence but urban domesticity and, by extension, urban citizenship more generally (Arnold, 2004). With this in mind, a small number of studies have examined the alternative meanings of home held by adults without housing (May, 2000; Veness, 1993). These studies have suggested differences from mainstream understandings across two dimensions. One point of departure is the degree to which home with its wider implications (i.e., safety, belonging, family) exists in a more idealistic sense. For persons who may have minimal lived experience of these constructs (e.g., disruptive and abusive childhood and adult contexts), home is more of a theoretical “story” that might be sought after but likely never found (Hill, 1991; May, 2000; Tomas & Dittmar, 1995). The second dimension in which there is

divergence is that for homeless persons, particularly those on the streets for longer periods, home becomes embodied to a greater degree with states of mind (e.g., security) relative to physical structure (Hill, 1991; Tomas & Dittmar, 1995; Wardaugh, 1999). While “homemaking” on the street often serves as a source of self-worth and dignity for the unhoused, it is more often than not viewed as a form urban disorder. For the unhoused, private activities of daily life—sleeping, eating, bathing—are often practiced, quite visibly, in public spaces. Commandeering public space for private use is necessary for survival but these private uses often conflict with the dominant meanings associated with public space as a planned and orderly sphere that should be used in legitimate and appropriate ways (e.g., consumption or leisure; Cresswell, 1996). This conflict between social definition and self-definition, social control and personal meaning is an important dimension of contemporary homelessness in North American cities. In many cities, an ensemble of political, economic, and cultural dynamics have ushered in “revanchist” urban regimes motivated by entrepreneurial interests in downtown regeneration and involving the intensification of social and spatial control measures within downtown public spaces (Smith, 1996; Soja, 2000). Neil Smith’s (1996) notion of the “revanchist city” describes the vengeful and punitive attempts at reclaiming and purifying prime spaces in the urban core for the purposes of investment, redevelopment, and consumption. A backlash against the visibly poor and homeless has been documented in these new “entrepreneurial cities,” often in the form of measures that aggressively seek to revitalize or “clean up” downtown districts (Mitchell, 2003; Ruddick, 1996). Indeed, on a daily basis street homeless populations confront multiple strategies of surveillance, control, exclusion, and displacement within prime urban spaces (Snow & Mulcahy, 2001). Draconian legal measures, such as homeless resistant urban design, “antiloitering” laws, and “antipandhandling” laws are now the pretext for the containment and removal of “disorderly” populations from prime public spaces (Davis, 1990; Mitchell, 2003). As the homeless are squeezed out of makeshift encampments and corralled into emergency shelters, they are increasingly confronted with the “home ideal” and their distance from it. A stay in an emergency shelter often confers on the individual the label “homeless” and the associated stigma of social failure. Accepting this label, however, is often a tacit prerequisite for gaining access and receiving assistance.

Meanings of Youth Homelessness

Definitions of youth homelessness are similar to adult homelessness in the conflation of the more easily operationalized status of housing (e.g., McKinneyVento Act of 2002, definition of a lack of “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence”) and the far broader implications for identity and morality. The one clear distinction between youth and adult conceptualizations of homelessness is the larger degree of heterogeneity of meanings associated with youth homelessness. This heterogeneity can readily be seen in the way in which

“runaway,” “homeless,” and “street youth” are used almost interchangeably in descriptions of this group. These labels hold quite different implications with “runaway” implying continued if broken attachment to family and “street youth” situating youths decidedly in the street context. A survey of the research literature and media readily reveals the wide variety of meanings linked to youth homelessness. As a group they’ve been regarded as delinquents suffering from “mental defect” (Thomas & Gostwyck, 1925), as a product of genetically deficient “foreign” parents (Brown, 1920), and their lives have been understood to be a consequence of mental illness (Gilpin, 1930) and a symptom of mental illness (Jenkins, 1971). They have been viewed in popular media as criminal vagrants (Riot, 1895), adventuresome truants (Four Runaway Boys, 1931), pathetic runaways (LeDuff, 1997), and abused children (Connor, 1982). In most accounts the feared and, in some respects, anticipated courses of many of these young people are miserable lives and early deaths. [life that becomes] wilder and more desperate; shame, increasing degradation, pride and hopelessness spurring on, and the end, the lonely death of a vagrant in the wards of the penitentiary hospital. (C.L.B., 1854, p. 6) Contemporary investigation into the lives of these young people suggests that many homeless youths experience little of the security, safety, or comfort associated with the construct of home. Research has indicated that most youth are thrown out of or run from abusive and chaotic family backgrounds to a life away from family characterized by poor mental and physical health, substance use, victimization, and criminality (Baron, 2003; Ensign, 1998; Kidd, 2006; Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Yoder, 1999). While much of the research literature and popular coverage of youth homelessness revolves around portrayals of the high levels of risk, grim lives, and early deaths of these young people, some studies have found tremendous resilience in compliment to extreme risk. These works have found that many youths have developed strong abilities to be self-reliant, networks of mutual support, and spirituality (Lindsey, Kurtz, Jarvis, & Nackenrud, 2000; Rew & Horner, 2003; Rew, Taylor-Seehafer, Thomas, & Yockey, 2001). Furthermore, many homeless young people demonstrate an ability to adapt to extremely adverse circumstances, constructing new skill sets and values that allow them to survive for years in any number of dangerous contexts (Kidd & Davidson, 2007). In this article we sought, through examination of the narratives of youths such as the young woman who made the initial challenge, to deepen the dialogue around home and homelessness for these individuals. It was hoped that by understanding better how these constructs relate with the resilience of these youths, it might provide further direction as to how we (the public, policy makers, researchers, service providers) can help them find home be it a state of mind and/or four walls and a ceiling.

What Defines a Youth Experiencing Homelessness?

According to the article, *Homeless Youth: Defining the Population and the Problem*:

“Homeless youth are typically defined as unaccompanied youth ages 12 and older (up to age 17, 21, or 24) who are without family support and who are living in shelters, on the streets, in cars or vacant buildings, or who are “coach surfing” or living in other unstable circumstances.”

Therefore, it is important to understand that a youth doesn’t have to be on the streets to be considered homeless. **They just have to be without a regular shelter and a stable financial income upon which they are dependent.**

<http://www.nrcdv.org/rhydvt toolkit/each-field/homeless-youth/define.html>

Now Think Critically

Chapter 1: *What is Youth Homelessness?*

1. In your own words, what is youth homelessness?
 2. What does home mean to you? How do you think your definition differs from youth experiencing homelessness?
 3. Why do you think it is important to be conscientious of politically correct terms such as “experiencing homelessness” instead of “homeless”?
 4. Got anything else on your mind? Write it down here.

Chapter 2:

LGBTQ Homeless Youth & Unsupportive Households





Raciel, 19, Brooklyn, NY

I wasn't scared to move to New York. I'd been sneaking away to the city since I was 11. My friends and I would skip school and ask people how to get to the Village. My dad wasn't a parent who was overprotective. I never gave my parents reason to disbelieve me.

I've been happy since moving to New York. Not as happy as I was in the beginning, but that was during the summertime when everything was great.

I was on the beach last summer, and guys would just hit on me. It was a lot easier for me to meet people in New York. It was on the beach that I met a 42-year-old guy who was a social worker at NYU. We only dated for two months, but I really got to know him. I really fell in love with him. It was so cosmic, I guess. It was one of the greatest times of my life.

But I had to get rid of him. He didn't know what he wanted. It was so unstable. One minute he didn't want me, and the next minute he did.

I couldn't possibly date someone my age. Even if they're only a year older, they've always been older. I tried to date younger guys and it did not work out. Kids my age usually jump into relationships, which I think is reckless.

But my mind is so stuck on school and work now, I don't want to date. I was always the kind of person who needed to be with someone, but I want to party and be free. A boy would take too much away.

I'm smart and very creative, but academically I have my moments. I dropped out of high school in ninth grade.

The biggest problem was my mother's instability. She had a boyfriend and it was all about him. We were constantly arguing. I was going to move in with my dad, but then he called me up and said, "I don't want your gayness in my house." So I got in contact with my aunt and uncle in Pennsylvania. If I had my own car I'd probably still be there, but I don't like depending on people.

So I told my dad I couldn't stay with my aunt and uncle and he said, "You are my son and you are coming to stay with me." When he said I could stay with him in Newark, New Jersey, I couldn't believe it. But I didn't find myself going anywhere there. That's where my homelessness started. I could go home if I told my parents I was done with this struggling, but then I would be at step one. I didn't come this far to go back now.

I was never on-the-street homeless. I did my research. I wasn't going to stay at a regular men's shelter. It's very dangerous. I stayed at the Covenant House for 40 days. That's when a bed opened up at [Ali Forney](#). There are only so many beds. There are 4,000 homeless kids who identify as LGBT. If you don't know about the services, you're out of luck.

I got my GED at Hetrick Martin Institute. My teachers helped me out so much. I totally felt comfortable being around so many gay kids, and it helped me accept myself even more. I never say that out loud, but it's true. Growing up with my parents throwing it in my face all the time, it was really hard for me to accept being gay.

But since moving to New York, I act how I want to act. I have an internship in PR and am going to school at Kingsborough Community College. I'm so proud of myself. I'm kind of surviving. It's not New York City unless you struggle.

As told to Diana Scholl.

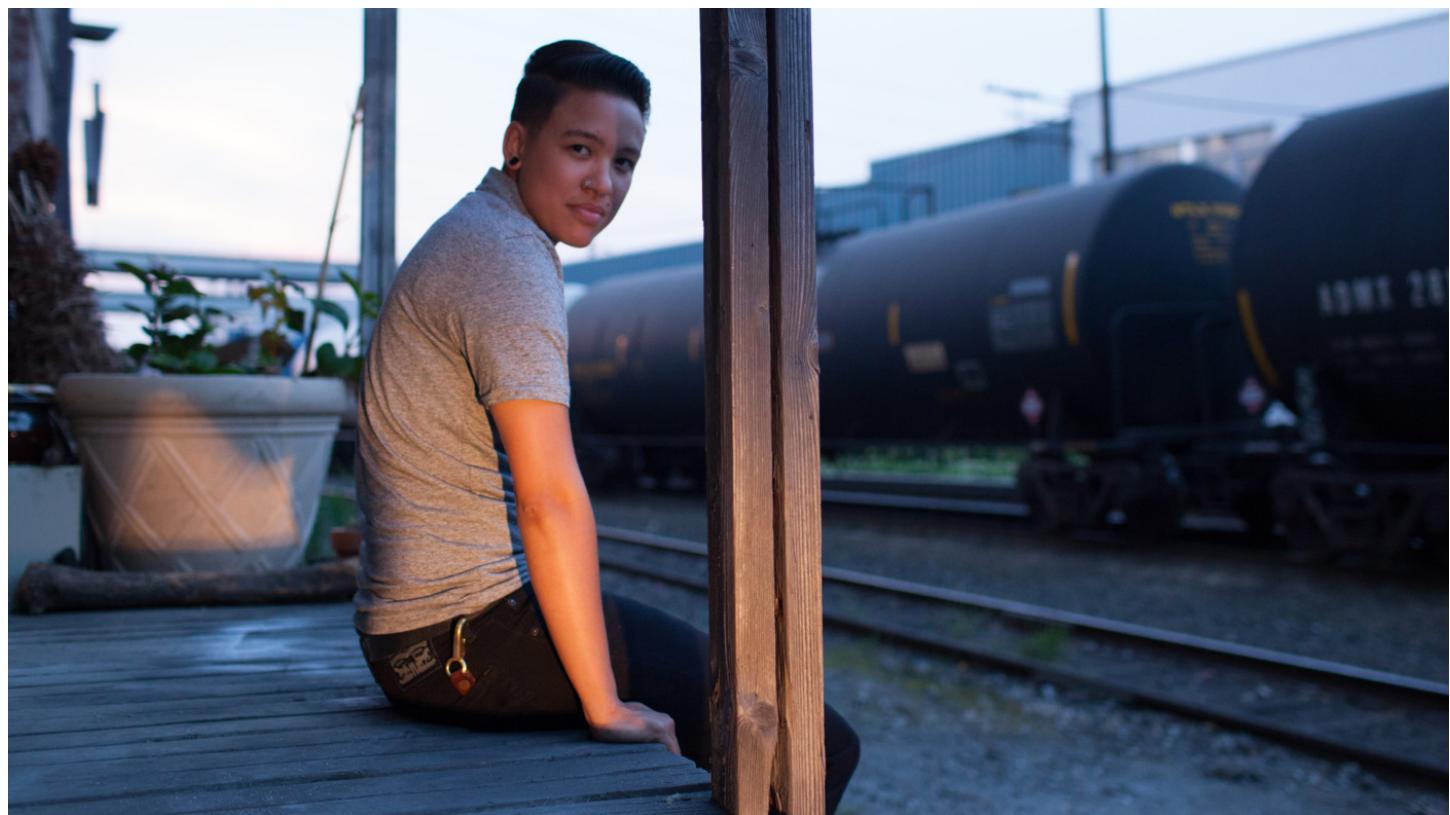
Photo by Laurel Golio, taken in Brooklyn, NY, 2011
To tell your story, email hello@wearetheyouth.org

About the Project: *We Are the Youth* is an ongoing photographic journalism project chronicling the individual stories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer youth in the United States. Through photographic portraits and "as told to" interviews in the participants' own voices, *We Are the Youth* captures the incredible diversity and uniqueness among the LGBTQ youth population. *We Are the Youth* addresses the lack of visibility of LGBTQ young people by providing a space to share stories in an honest and respectful way.

The Forsaken: A Rising Number of Homeless Gay Teens Are Being Cast Out by Religious Families

While life gets better for millions of gays, the number of homeless LGBT teens - many cast out by their religious families - quietly keeps growing

BY ALEX MORRIS September 3, 2014



Jackie was homeless off and on for years after her Catholic parents cut ties with her for coming out

One late night at the end of her sophomore year of college, Jackie sat in her parked car and made a phone call that would forever change the course of her life. An attractive sorority girl with almond eyes and delicate dimples, she was the product of a charmed Boise, Idaho, upbringing: a father who worked in finance, a private school education, a pool in the backyard, all the advantages that an upper-middle-class suburban childhood can provide – along with all the expectations attendant to that privilege.

"There was a standard to meet," Jackie says. "And I had met that standard my whole life. I was a straight-A student, the president of every club, I was in every sport. I remember my first day of college, my parents came with me to register for classes, and they sat down with my adviser and said, 'So, what's the best way to get her into law school?'"

Jackie just followed her parents' lead understanding implicitly that discipline and structure went hand in hand with her family's devout Catholic beliefs. She attended Mass three times a week, volunteered as an altar server and was the fourth generation of her family to attend her Catholic school; her grandfather had helped tile the cathedral. "My junior year of high school, my parents thought it was weird that I'd never had a boyfriend," she says, "so I knew I was supposed to get one. And I did. It was all just a rational thought process. None of it was emotionally involved."

After graduating, Jackie attended nearby University of Idaho, where she rushed a sorority at her parents' prompting. She chose a triple major of which they approved. "I remember walking out of the sorority house to go to Walmart or something, and I stopped at the door and thought to myself, 'Should I tell someone I'm leaving?'" she says. "It was the first time in my life where I could just go somewhere and be my own person."

In fact, it took the freedom of college for Jackie to even realize who her "own person" was. "Growing up, I knew that I felt different, but when you grow up Catholic, you don't really know gay is an option," she says. "I grew up in a household that said 'fag' a lot. We called people 'fags,' or things were 'faggy.'" Her only sex-ed class was taught by a priest, and all she remembers him saying is, "'Don't masturbate and don't be gay.' I didn't know what those words meant, so I just hoped to God that I wasn't doing either of them."

When Jackie got to college, the "typical gay sorority encounters" she found herself having didn't seem to qualify as anything more than youthful exploration; she thought all girls drunkenly made out with their best friends. By her sophomore year, she was dating a fraternity brother but was also increasingly turned on by a friend she worked with at the campus women's center. "I was just playing it off as 'So maybe I'm just gay for you – I mean, I don't have to tell my boyfriend' kind of thing," she says. "I knew what I wanted, but it was never something I ever

envisioned that I could have on a public level." And yet, as her friendship with this woman turned physical and their relationship grew more serious, Jackie saw her future shrinking before her: a heterosexual marriage, children, church and the knowledge that all of it was based on a lie. "I honestly thought my whole life I was just going to be an undercover gay," she says, shaking her head in disbelief.

For better or worse, that plan was never to be. Toward the end of her sophomore year, Jackie got a text message from one of her sorority sisters who said she'd been seen kissing another girl, after which certain sisters started making it clear that they were not comfortable around Jackie. ("You're living in the same house together," she says, "and, of course, to close-minded people, if somebody's gay, that means you're automatically interested in all 80 of them.") Eventually, she went before her chapter's executive board and became the first sorority girl at her college to ever come out, at which point she realized that if she didn't tell her parents, someone else would. "I was convinced somebody was going to blast it on Facebook."

So while Jackie hoped for the best, she knew the call she was making had the potential to not end well. "You can't hate me after I say this," she pleaded when, alarmed to be receiving a call in the middle of the night, her mom picked up the phone.

"Oh, my God, you're pregnant" was her mom's first response, before running through a litany of parental fears. "Are you in jail? Did you get expelled? Are you in trouble? What happened? What did you do?" Suddenly her mom's silence matched Jackie's own. "Oh, my God," she murmured in disbelief. "Are you gay?"

"Yeah," Jackie forced herself to say.

After what felt like an eternity, her mom finally responded. "I don't know what we could have done for God to have given us a fag as a child," she said before hanging up.

As soon as the line went dead, Jackie began sobbing. Still, she convinced herself that her parents would come around and accept her, despite what they perceived to be her flaw. As planned, she drove to Canada to celebrate her birthday with friends. When her debit card didn't work on the

second day of the trip, she figured it was because she was in another country. Once back in the States, however, she got a call from her older brother. "He said, 'Mom and Dad don't want to talk to you, but I'm supposed to tell you what's going to happen,'" Jackie recalls. "And he's like, 'All your cards are going to be shut off, and Mom and Dad want you to take the car and drop it off at this specific location. Your phone's going to last for this much longer. They don't want you coming to the house, and you're not to contact them. You're not going to get any money from them. Nothing. And if you don't return the car, they're going to report it stolen.' And I'm just bawling. I hung up on him because I couldn't handle it." Her brother was so firm, so matter-of-fact, it was as if they already weren't family.

From that moment, Jackie knew that she was entirely on her own, that she had no home, no money and no family who would help her – and that this was the terrible price she'd pay for being a lesbian.

Jackie's story may be distinctive in its particulars, but across America, it is hardly unique. Research done by San Francisco State University's Family Acceptance Project, which studies and works to prevent health and mental health risks facing LGBT youth, empirically confirms what common sense would imply to be true: Highly religious parents are significantly more likely than their less-religious counterparts to reject their children for being gay – a finding that social-service workers believe goes a long way toward explaining why LGBT people make up roughly five percent of the youth population overall, but an estimated 40 percent of the homeless-youth population. The Center for American Progress has reported that there are between 320,000 and 400,000 homeless LGBT youths in the United States. Meanwhile, as societal advancements have made being gay less stigmatized and gay people more visible – and as the Internet now allows kids to reach beyond their circumscribed social groups for acceptance and support – the average coming-out age has dropped from post-college age in the 1990s to around 16 today, which means that more and more kids are coming out while they're still economically reliant on their families. The resulting flood of kids who end up on the street, kicked out by parents whose religious beliefs often make them feel compelled to cast out their own offspring (one study estimates that up to 40 percent of LGBT homeless youth leave home due to family rejection), has been called a

"hidden epidemic." Tragically, every step forward for the gay-rights movement creates a false hope of acceptance for certain youth, and therefore a swelling of the homeless-youth population.

"The summer that marriage equality passed in New York, we saw the number of homeless kids looking for shelter go up 40 percent," says Carl Siciliano, founder of the Ali Forney Center, the nation's largest organization dedicated to homeless LGBT youth. A former Benedictine monk-in-training, who once went by the nickname Baby Jesus, Siciliano had spent years living in monasteries and serving in shelters run by the Catholic Worker Movement before his own sexuality inextricably came between him and his institutional faith. "I ended up just feeling like the Catholic Church was wack," he says. "Cardinal O'Connor [the archbishop of New York at the time who once said if he was forced to hire homosexuals, he would shut down all of the Catholic schools and orphanages in the diocese] was like the arch-homophobe of America." Siciliano was working at a housing program for the homeless in the Nineties when he noticed that his clientele was getting younger and younger. Until then, he says, "you almost never saw kids. It was Vietnam vets, alcoholics and deinstitutionalized mentally ill people." But not only were more kids showing up, they were also disappearing. "Every couple of months one of our kids would get killed," Siciliano says. "And it would always be a gay kid." In 2002, he founded the Ali Forney Center, naming it after a homeless 22-year-old who'd been shot in the head on the street in Harlem, not far from where the organization's drop-in center currently resides. Siciliano had been close with Forney and felt that had he had a safe place to go, he might be alive today.

Since founding the center, Siciliano, 49, has become one of the nation's most outspoken homeless advocates. "I feel like the LGBT movement has been asleep at the wheel when it comes to this," he says, running his hands through his closely cropped hair and sighing. "We've been so focused on laws – changing the laws around marriage equality, changing 'don't ask, don't tell,' getting adoption rights – that we haven't been fighting for economic resources. How many tax dollars do gay people contribute? What percentage of tax dollars comes back to our gay kids? We haven't matured enough as a movement yet that we're looking at the economics of things."

Siciliano also understands that the kids he works with don't sync up with to the message everyone wants to hear: It gets better. "There is a psychological reality that when you're an oppressed group whose very existence is under attack, you need to create this narrative about how great it is to be what you are," he says. "It's like, 'Leave the repression and the fear behind and be embraced by this accepting community, and suddenly everyone is beautiful and has good bodies and great sex and beautiful furniture, and rah-rah-rah.' And, from day one of the Stonewall Riots, homeless kids were not what people wanted to see. No one wanted to see young people coming out and being cast into destitution. It didn't fit the narrative."

Jackie knew well what her parents thought of homosexuality, but she still held out hope that maybe over time her family would come around. With the last of her cash, she bought a bus ticket back to campus, where within a few weeks she defaulted on her rent. She started couch surfing and persuaded the women's center to let her work through the summer for \$6 an hour, 10 hours a week. "I mean, it was crap money, but it was something," she says. "I didn't tell anybody the situation I was in. I didn't tell anybody I was hungry every day. I didn't tell them I didn't have a place to stay, because I thought this was my punishment for being gay and I deserved it." She'd ask friends to crash overnight, lying about being too drunk to go home. If that fell through, she'd spend nights in study rooms on campus. She found herself dating women simply to have a bed, which she admits was neither "healthy nor permanent."

In the upheaval that had suddenly become her daily existence, Jackie felt that she had to cling to something constant; she chose her education. The day after returning to campus, she went to the financial aid office to ask for the help she'd never before had to seek, appealing to the university to gain status as an independent student. Though she did eventually receive tuition assistance, Jackie says, "You're not meant to be homeless and a student. I learned really fast how to pretend to not be poor. I learned that if I had a couple of nice things to wear, nobody would notice that you wear them all the time. Or if you are a sociable person, people don't notice that you're never actually buying drinks. You just sort of figure it out."

She was soon taking any job she could get: on campus, in town, even picking up the odd construction shift. "I would do anything I could for money," she says. She finally pieced together enough funds to get a room in an apartment, but she couldn't afford furniture. To hide her penury, she never let anyone in her room. Even being around other gay people was sometimes difficult, a reminder that though "they had committed the same 'sin,' their parents loved them," she says. "They got to go home for the holidays. I had these moments when I would say, 'I did everything right. I excelled in all the right ways. So why me?' That hurt really bad. I mean, how do you explain to people that your parents chose not to parent you anymore?"

At times, it felt like more than Jackie could bear, and in these moments of doubt and despair she wrote her mother and father countless letters and e-mails begging them to be her parents again. "I wanted to take it all back so badly," she says. "I was just like, 'I'm sorry, I didn't mean any of it.'" They eventually responded: If she went to a conversion therapist and tried to be straight, they would at least help her financially. At first, she agreed. "But I couldn't do it," she says now, four years later, in a city hundreds of miles away from where she imagines her parents still live. "I wanted to be their kid, but I couldn't change. Everyone I'd ever known my whole life cut ties with me. But this was who I am."

Growing up in a small Midwestern town, the son of a divorced Latina who worked three jobs, James would have felt like an outsider even if it weren't for his sexuality. His hometown was the kind of all-American, corn fed place where "on every street corner you'd find a church" and where "the football players, if they knew you were gay, would call you a fag and tell you to suck their dick, or try to get you to bend over." Already sidelined for being a minority, James, 20, says he "was terrified of being branded the gay kid." In fact, he was so afraid that he suppressed an effervescent personality and kept to himself. When an openly gay classmate gave him a love letter, James was too scared to act on the impulses he'd felt for as long as he could remember. "So I just flipped out on him. I wasn't ready for that."

The same kind of fear kept James silent at home, where his mom cycled through religions: first Catholic, then Pentecostal ("die-hard Pentecostal"), then Jehovah's Witness, and then back to

Catholic once she met James' stepfather. Though James never told his mom he liked other boys, her views on the matter were abundantly clear - "It was disgusting, sick, adding to the end of the world" - and she must have suspected. "At one point, and I was right there," he says, "my mom actually told this lady that she loved all of her children besides me."

Nevertheless, he worked up the courage to secretly start dating someone he'd met while waiting tables, and when he accidentally left his phone at home one day, his mom searched through it and found a picture of them kissing. "That was the day it really got serious," James says of the fallout with his family. "When I came home, she accused me of being a whore and told me I'd die of STDs. She made my brother move out of the room that we shared. I guess she thought it was a disease or something, that I would give him the gay. Like, I'd touch him and he'd automatically be gay."

Shortly after James graduated from high school, his mom told him that her home was not open to "people like you." He grabbed a bag and followed her orders. "I was like, 'I don't know how I'm going to do this, I don't know where I'm going,'" he says. "'But at some point, it has to get better.'" He decided to get as far from home as he could. "I hitchhiked - 18-wheelers, anybody who would give me a ride. I knew it was dangerous." He was in Florida before he felt like he'd gone far enough to stay put, though the only place he could find to sleep was an abandoned lot. "It used to be an old bus station," he says, shrugging. He lasted three penniless weeks alone there, collecting rainwater to drink and going hungry. "For the first week, you'll be like, 'I'm dying of hunger,' but after a while you don't feel it anymore." He finally got in touch with a friend who lived in Atlanta, and ended up staying in the friend's car until they heard about a shelter called Lost-n-Found Youth, which had been started specifically for the large influx of homeless LGBT kids who travel from the surrounding red states to one of the South's most liberal cities.

As James (who has asked me to change his name so he would not be identifiable to his family) is telling me this, he's covered in dust and plaster particles from renovation work on the rambling old Victorian that Lost-n-Found has been able to lease for \$1 a year. One day, the house will be able to give shelter to 18 homeless youths - a day that cannot come nearly soon enough for Rick

Westbrook, a kindly 51-year-old with a serious Southern drawl. Along with two friends, Westbrook started Lost-n-Found in a small but cozy home he rented using donated funds, after learning that LGBT youth were frequently being turned away at local shelters.

Westbrook, known to his charges as "Mama Rick," says this has been due to discrimination: In one survey, approximately one in five LGBT youth were unable to secure short-term shelter, and 16 percent could not get assistance with longer-term housing – figures that were almost double those of their non-LGBT peers. However, it's clear that funding is also a problem. The U.S. government spends more than \$5 billion annually on homeless-assistance programs, yet federal laws allocate less than five percent to homeless children and youth specifically (though some money also makes its way to them through more generalized programs under agencies like HUD and the Department of Labor). Most of the dedicated funds are allocated through the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA), which expired last September. "This is the first time it has not been reauthorized on time since 1988," says Gregory Lewis, executive director of Cyndi Lauper's True Colors Fund, who is working with Congress to ensure that RHYA will include a nondiscrimination clause. Currently, Lewis tells me, "there are no legal federal protections in place to bar discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in RHYA programs." At one residential placement facility in Michigan, LGBT teens were made to wear orange jumpsuits to "warn" other residents about their sexuality.

Since 2002, when President George W. Bush issued an executive order that permitted faith-based organizations to receive federal support for social services, an increased amount of federal funding has gone to churches and religion affiliated organizations where LGBT youth may not feel welcome. The biggest provider for homeless youth in the country is Covenant House, an organization based in New York and a shelter where LGBT teens have historically faced harassment. "The gay kids would routinely get bashed there," Siciliano tells me. "In the Nineties, one of the first kids I had go there came back and said he would never go back. When I asked why, he said they put him in a dorm with 14 kids, and when they went to bed, they gathered around and urinated on him to show how much they hated having a gay kid there."

Yet to have even landed a bed at Covenant would have taken some luck. In New York, a city with nearly 4,000 homeless youth, there are only around 350 spots in youth shelters, and less than a third of those spots are designated for LGBT kids, despite their disproportionate share of the homeless-youth population. (And considering that many homeless youth may not openly identify themselves as LGBT when seeking services, many providers believe that the estimate of 40 percent may be far too low.) Across the country, there are only 4,000 youth-shelter beds overall, while an estimate derived from the National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway and Thrown away Children put the number of homeless minors at 1.7 million. "We've actually thought about creating a handbook: This is what to look for in a decent, abandoned building to stay in," says Westbrook ruefully. "If we don't have the space for them, as an activist, it's the next logical step: Give them information."

While reserving beds for LGBT youth might at first seem like segregation, providers have often found that it can be difficult to ensure a safe space otherwise - and that creating a safe space can have a very discernible effect. James' roommate Hannah (unlike most shelters, Lost-n-Found does not separate rooms by sex, making it much easier for trans kids to assimilate) was in and out of shelters all over the Atlanta area for more than three years after she was kicked out by a mother who had adopted her at age two because she'd always wanted a girl, and then rejected her when Hannah proved not girlie enough. "She read me Scripture about how people who have sexual sin would not enter the gates of heaven," Hannah, a zaftig African American, says, frowning. When that didn't seem to have an effect, "she takes a knife and puts it right here" - Hannah points to her neck - "and says she will kill me, that she hates me and regrets adopting me." Hannah was 20 and just back from a Job Corps training program when she found a policeman at her bedroom door telling her she had to leave, that her mom no longer wanted Hannah under her roof. Her stepfather gave her \$20 on the way out. While driving her to a bus stop, the cop told her how sorry he was.

Over the next three years, Hannah cycled through shelter after shelter. The weeks, and sometimes months, when she couldn't find a bed, she slept on the street, often outside the Day Shelter for Women, where she could at least get warm meals and a shower, even if she also found

maggots in her hair. Living like that, it was impossible to imagine going to a job interview, especially after she lost her birth certificate and high school diploma when a worker at a shelter accidentally cleaned out her locker. She sold pot to make money and considered prostitution, a way many homeless women she knew got by. "I was very tempted," she tells me. "Like, I had a guy say, 'I'll give you \$100 if you do what I tell you to do.'" Hannah knew \$100 was enough money to put herself up in a hotel for a couple of nights, but she says, "I could never see myself doing it."

It wasn't until she finally got off the waitlist at Lost-n-Found that Hannah began to see there might be a future for herself as a non straight woman – a revelation that Westbrook assures me is not uncommon. "Just in the two years we've been up and running," he says, "there've been several kids we've run into who have been through every single system in town, but for some reason, they did not thrive. Other caseworkers had told us, 'Good luck with him or her. We did all we could.' These kids are now either in college or in an apartment of their own. The minute you bring them into a program like ours, where they're with people like themselves, they don't feel like they're outnumbered, they don't feel oppressed. They blossom."

Hannah still sometimes feels like she's "burning in hell." She still wonders if "my life's always been horrible because I like girls." But since she started staying at Lost-n-Found, things have definitely shifted. She no longer sleeps with a knife under her pillow or worries about being kicked out of a shelter for her sexuality. She has a steady job with UPS, LGBT friends who accept her and a small safety net of savings to get her own apartment one day soon. "I'm not scared no more," she says. "I don't have to worry about people beating on me. It has been 100 percent better."

For LGBT kids who remain homeless, the stakes are clearly life and death. They are seven times more likely than their straight counterparts to be the victims of a crime, often a violent one. Studies have shown they are more than three times more likely to engage in survival sex – for which shelter is the payment more often than cash. They are more likely to lack access to medical care, more likely to attempt suicide, more likely to use hard drugs and more likely to be arrested

for survival crimes. According to the Equity Project, leaving home because of family rejection is the single greatest predictor of involvement with the juvenile-justice system for LGBT youth. And for so many of these outcomes, the clock starts ticking the moment a kid hits the streets. "We know we have 24 to 48 hours to get to them before they do anything illegal – whether it's selling drugs, stealing or prostitution," says Westbrook. "It's a survival thing. In America, we lose six queer kids a day to the street. That's every four hours a queer kid dies, whether it be from freezing to death or getting the shit beat out of them or a drug overdose. This is our next real plague."

In fact, the ability to cope and handle homeless life may be significantly diminished in children who have grown up in very sheltered, religious environments. "It sounds so paradoxical, but the kid who's been abused and neglected from childhood, in this very perverse way, they're ready for the trauma that's to come on the streets," says Jim Theofelis, executive director of the Mockingbird Society, an advocacy organization for young people impacted by homelessness and the foster-care system, which does not always effectively screen for family acceptance before placing an LGBT youth. "But queer youth who grew up in a family where they were taken care of, and there was ice cream in the freezer at night, they face an extra challenge of really not being prepared for the culture of the streets or the foster-care system."

That so many once-coddled youth choose this lifestyle over remaining at home is a testament to how horrifying familial rejection can be – and a phenomenon youth advocates refer to as being not "kicked out" but rather "edged out." "The greatest gift my family ever gave me is driving me to the train station," says Luke, 20, a soft-spoken son of a Pentecostal preacher who grew up in a backwoods part of Tennessee so remote that the closest town had less than 2,000 people and was 20 miles away. His only neighbors were a great-aunt and great-uncle, and because he was homeschooled until the second grade, after which his education ceased altogether ("My family didn't approve of the things they taught at school, like science and sex ed"), he would go whole months at a time without seeing anyone outside of his family and the members of his church. He attended services at least three times a week, participating in faith healings and speaking in tongues. His dad performed exorcisms at home; once Luke realized that the feelings he had for

men meant that he was gay, he was terrified that an exorcism would be performed on him. "It's their belief that they can see auras or tell when people are lying, so I was always scared that everyone would be able to figure out my sexuality that way," Luke says. "I prayed all the time that they wouldn't. It was all just demon possession. That's how they thought all gay people were, just possessed." When the issue of gay rights would come up on the radio, Luke's father would say in disgust, "They should gather all the gay people together and just kill them." When Luke finally worked up the nerve to come out to his mother, she told him, "If you want to live, don't tell your dad."

But by then, Luke wasn't sure he did want to live. He felt so depressed that he rarely left his room. He started having panic attacks. When a friend he'd made online told him that he couldn't possibly stay in his situation any longer, he knew it was true. But he also knew that he didn't have any skills, any education, any money or anywhere else to go. That's when his friend sent him a \$300 train ticket to Portland, Oregon, and told him about a youth shelter called Outside In. Luke told his family he was leaving, and though they warned him about how scary it was in the outside world, they didn't stop him.

For Luke, the outside world has in fact been scary. During his three-day train ride to the West Coast, he barely left his seat except to change trains in Chicago, where Union Station was filled with more people than he'd ever seen in his life. Once he got to Portland and secured a shelter bed, he was so shy that he couldn't speak above a whisper. "There were a lot of heroin users, a lot of meth and weed," he says. "I was like, 'I don't know if I can do this, because I'm used to being around church people.'" Nevertheless, the time away from his family has helped him begin to accept the reality of his sexuality. "I'm free now, and I can be how I want, and that's not wrong at all. It's a struggle at times, but I'm getting there." On the day we spoke, Luke had been homeless for almost a year. "It's definitely been the best year of my life," he says.

On Palm Sunday this past April, Carl Siciliano wrote an open letter to Pope Francis that was published as a full-page ad in *The New York Times*. "Your Holiness," it began, "I write to you as a Roman Catholic, a former Benedictine monk and as a gay man who has spent over 30 years

serving the homeless." It then went on to explain how the papal stance on homosexuality tears families apart and to beg the head of the church – which disregards biblical passages on atrocities like slavery and genocide – to see that the time has come to reconsider a teaching that yields "such a bitter harvest."

Of course, the bitter harvest begins long before a child ends up on the streets. When Ben, the youngest son of a Baptist minister from New Hampshire, asked his mother at age nine what the word "gay" meant, he didn't realize that the answer she gave would describe his own feelings – or that those feelings would, from that moment on, impact his emotional development. "She explained what it was and told me that it was an abomination," Ben tells me in the sunny group-therapy room at the Ali Forney Center, which he ran away to at age 17. "It was like telling a nine-year-old that they are broken. I remember being on the kitchen floor just crying, praying to God for him to make me normal. That's how I looked at it: 'If it's this bad for me to be this way, why did God make me? I wish I were dead.'" When Ben finally did come out to his parents at age 16, they sent him away to a Christian school across the country and began to explore reparative-therapy options, all of which reinforced the idea that he was terribly flawed, so much so that "the people closest to me thought I needed to be changed, fixed."

The problem is, running away, as Ben did, may deliver youth from their parents' judgment, but not from that of God – whom more than half of the youth I spoke with said they still believed in – and once on the street, the psychological trauma that's inherent in this deeply internalized shame often plays out to their detriment. And yet, as hard as it might be to imagine conservative faiths backing down from their demonization of homosexuality, it can be equally hard to get activists to address the issue. "LGBT advocacy groups don't want to talk about religion," says Mitchell Gold, founder of Faith in America. "One, they don't want to come across as anti-religion. And two, they just aren't familiar with it. But the number-one hurdle to LGBT equality is religious based bigotry. The face of the gay-rights movement shouldn't be what I call '40-year-old well-moisturized couples.' The face of the gay-rights movement should be a 15-year-old kid that's been thrown out of his house and taught that he's a sinner."

Of course, even when it's a large factor, religion often isn't the only reason a child leaves home. Many stories include poverty, addiction and abuse; the intricate workings of a family's dynamic can be impossible for an outsider to understand or parse. But it becomes so natural to vilify parents who've abdicated their duties or alienated their kids that it is often forgotten how very hard it can be to change one's worldview in the face of deeply ingrained religious beliefs. "It's easy to see kids as victims and parents as perpetrators," says Caitlin Ryan of the Family Acceptance Project. "But most parents would not want to make a Sophie's choice between their faith and their child. These are parents who have been given misinformation for years."

Nevertheless, more than 40 percent of the agencies responding to the LGBT Homeless Youth Provider Survey do not offer services that address family conflict. When Child Services got involved with Ben's case, as the law requires of homeless minors, they initially wanted to send him home. And his parents wanted him back: Under their own roof, they would have been able to control his contact with the secular influences they felt were affecting his sexuality. Ben refused to return to that environment. He promised his social worker that he would only run away again – and that the next time, he'd know enough to stay under the radar.

In December 2013, Jackie finally graduated from college – not that she attended the ceremonies. "The only reason you walk during graduation is so people can watch you," she says. "But I had nobody to invite – and a cap and gown cost money – so I just took a shift at work instead."

As she's saying all this, Jackie, now 24, is slowly sipping a Pabst Blue Ribbon in the sort of pleasant dive you'd expect to find in Portland, the city she now calls home (the signs on the bathroom doors read BOTH and EITHER). Last week, the marriage-equality law went into effect in Oregon, and so it's a celebratory time, even for those like Jackie who know what disappointments faith in one's future can bring. Not long ago, she was in Ikea with her girlfriend, when, for the first time in years, she felt herself begin to come apart. "I never shed a tear after coming out, ever, but I always knew the mourning was going to come, and it did," she says. "When you stop stressing about food and having a roof over your head, you stress about normal

things like wanting to be wanted, or wanting to be loved, or 'Damn, I wish I had a photo of myself from when I was a kid.'"

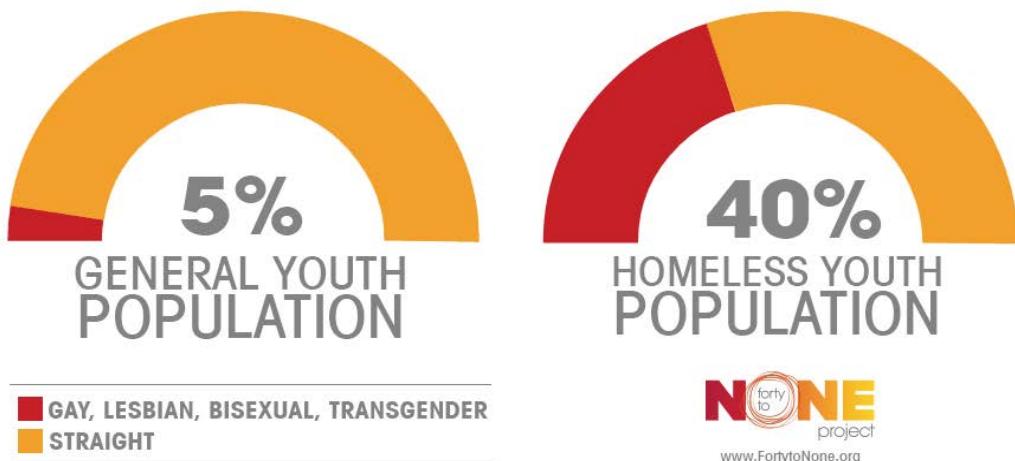
Jackie's girlfriend has helped her cope with the transition. Now that Jackie has a job training sexual assault advocates, she can enjoy the first adult relationship she's ever had, in which a stocked fridge and warm bed weren't wrapped up in it, marring the emotional aspects. And while she says it's strange, being with someone simply to be with them, she admits "there's a healing process in entering a consensual, healthy relationship that's based on love rather than need." It's not quite the same as having a family, but it's not like being alone either.

The evening's golden sunlight streams in through the bar's front window, washing the room in sepia tones. Jackie leans back in her chair. Wearing Ray-Bans, hair rakishly swooped to the side, she looks like any other educated, socially conscious Portland hipster. But for Jackie, poverty and abandonment are brands she'll carry for life. "I'll never look at a bed in the same way; I'll never look at food in the same way," she says. "Sometimes, I'll sit at a table with people I interact with on a daily basis and think, 'None of these people have an inkling of anything I've been through, and they never will.'"

Jackie doubts she'll ever speak to her family again, though it's still hard to think of holidays spent without them, of childhood stories that will remain untold, of the jarring lack of continuity between her existence then and now. "I spent the past four years paying for that one sentence I uttered," she says quietly. "People ask me all the time if I hate my parents for everything they've put me through, but I really don't. If anything, I just feel sad for them because I'm sure it hurts so bad to have chosen their religious values over their child. I mean, in the grand scheme of things, they suffered through it just as much as I did, just in different ways." She sighs and looks out the window to where the shadows will soon lengthen into night. "I think, in the long run, no one won."

<http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/the-forsaken-a-rising-number-of-homeless-gay-teens-are-being-cast-out-by-religious-families-20140903#ixzz3vBOnHsKW>

LGBTQ Homeless Youth Statistics



**LGBTQ OVER-REPRESENTED AMONG NYC'S HOMELESS YOUTH.
1 IN 4 HOMELESS YOUTH IN NYC COMPARED TO 1 IN 20 FOR ALL NYC YOUTH.**



70% OF HOMELESS YOUTH LEFT THEIR HOMES TO ESCAPE VIOLENCE



HOMELESS YOUTH ARE OFTEN ARRESTED JUST FOR TRYING TO SURVIVE.



**OFFICIAL NYC HOMELESS YOUTH COUNT: 71 (COUNTED ON THE COLDEST NIGHT OF THE YEAR)
ESTIMATE ACCORDING TO EXPERTS: 5,000**



NATIONWIDE, THERE'S LESS THAN 1 SHELTER BED FOR EVERY 10 HOMELESS YOUTH



<http://firesteelwa.org/2014/06/very-often-lgbt-teens-have-no-concept-that-their-life-can-be-good/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/brebiondi/end-youth-homelessness/>

Now Think Critically

Chapter 2: LGBTQ Homeless Youth & Unsupportive Households

1. Describe Jackie's situation in your own words.
 2. Why is it significant that Jackie didn't fully feel the effect of her family shutting her out until she was no longer living on the streets? What does this show about the emotional strain experiencing homelessness places on youth?
 3. What realities do LGBTQ individuals face when they come out? What emotional impact do you think it would have on an individual when they are told by their family members they need to be 'fixed' because of their sexuality?
 4. Got anything else on your mind? Write it down here.

Chapter 3:

The Realities of Being Homeless: Family and Survival



Finding Nikki: Surviving and Thriving After Child Homelessness

By Nikki Johnson-Huston



Standing in line hoping to get a bed in a night shelter is a harrowing experience with two potential outcomes, neither of them ideal. With luck you get a place indoors to sleep, but if you're not in line early enough, or if there are fewer

available beds than expected, you're left facing the night on the street—which, for me, my mother, and my brother, Michael, meant sleeping on a park bench.

This was the reality I knew as a nine-year-old who lived for several months on the streets and in shelters in San Diego. I spent many of my days hungry, scared, and not knowing where my next meal would come from or where we might be living on a particular day. When the things that you should take for granted, like food and shelter, are no longer guaranteed, it's incredibility scary. It is hard for a child to fully explain what those circumstances do to you. In retrospect I know that the experience takes away your sense of trust and stability; it made me someone I would not have otherwise been. I went from being curious and precocious to being quiet and watchful, suspicious of all of the new people in my life, not knowing if they were friend or foe.

It felt sometimes like the world had forgotten about us. But then we would meet someone who treated us with respect. Such people included those at the homeless shelter who would give us an extra blanket or pillow, or workers at the San Diego Rescue Mission—where we would get two meals a day—who gave us extra cookies and colored marshmallows to get through the days and nights. A person who gave me a snack and asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up nourished not just my mind but my spirit. For a few moments that person gave me a sense of being normal and, most importantly, helped me to believe that I had a future, complete with the luxury to decide what I wanted to accomplish.

What I remember most about being in the shelter were the sounds. We all know from experience that at night, when most of the world is at rest, sounds travel. This is especially true in the realm of shelters, where strangers, broken from the struggles of lives gone wrong, come together to share the night.

Imagine sharing a space with those suffering from various stages of mental illness, with men and women shaking with the effects of addiction or untreated medical conditions; imagine hearing the cries of mothers losing the dreams they once held dear for themselves and their children, mixed with the sounds of your own hungry stomach. You are hearing the song of catastrophic poverty that is still played throughout the shelter system in the United States on a nightly basis. For the majority of Americans, this song is played far enough out of earshot to keep us from forcing our leaders to solve this epidemic.

My mother had drug and alcohol issues that played a significant role in our being homeless, but I also believe that she suffered from the effects of her upbringing in poverty. My mother was like many people I knew growing up, who wanted better lives for themselves but gave up because of the hurt and disappointment of unfulfilled dreams and the belief that there was nothing they could do to change their circumstances. But during those nights in the shelter I held on to my dreams of having a better life. These were dreams of being a successful lawyer who had a house and plenty of food and never had to worry about being without again. Those dreams seemed far from becoming real when I didn't know where my next meal would come from, but they were all I had—the one thing that nobody could take away from me.

After several months on the streets, my mother decided that she could not keep us together as a family. She sent me to live with my disabled grandmother, who was living in senior citizen Section 8 housing in Santa Maria, California. We were told that my grandmother could take only one of us. Michael was put in foster care, and we never lived together as a family again. My grandmother used welfare, food stamps, and her Social Security payments to raise me; we didn't have much, but she provided a level of stability and security that I had never known. About three and a half years after I went to live with my grandmother, she became seriously ill, and it was decided that I would live with my mother and stepfather (whom she had met during the time we received services at the rescue mission). I spent about a year and a half with my mother, then returned to my grandmother's home after my mother and stepfather lost their jobs and we ended up homeless again. I stayed with my grandmother until I graduated from high school.

In my own family, services including addiction and abuse counseling at the homelessness stage could have had

an immediate and long-lasting impact.

I came to Philadelphia to attend college on a scholarship but struggled both emotionally and academically, feeling that I didn't belong and wasn't good enough. I didn't ask for help and was ashamed of my past. The price I paid was to get kicked out of school at the end of my first year. Afterward I struggled for several years to find my place in the world, but I was fortunate enough to get a job as a live-in nanny for a family of lawyers who believed in me and my dream of attending law school. I went back to college at night and finally got on the right path. I am now a successful tax lawyer living in Philadelphia.

I lost contact with Michael after I flunked out of college and would not see him for another 11 years. Michael contacted me in 2004, during my last semester of law school. He was addicted to meth and had HIV. He was working on the set of the television show Frasier—which was filming its last couple of episodes—and would soon be out of a job.

I spent the last six years of Michael's life trying to get him to rehab, trying to persuade him to go back to school to get his GED, and trying to have a real relationship with him. But in July 2010 I received a call telling me that Michael had hanged himself and was in a coma. I had to fly to California and remove him from life support. After my brother died I decided that I was going to advocate for those homeless children who felt invisible and powerless, that out of his death I could do some good.

Solutions from My Own Life

I long for the day when children will no longer face the fear and confusion of homelessness as I did at nine. It still affects my actions today, some three decades later, even though I'm now a successful attorney and speaker. This is why solving the issue of catastrophic poverty is so complex, because the

repercussions continue to be felt throughout a person's life.

There is no easy, one-size-fits-all answer to the question of how we end homelessness and break the cycle of generational poverty. I can speak, however, to what has worked in my own life and what would have enabled me to overcome my circumstances more quickly and with fewer scars.

The latest trends in addressing homelessness are programs referred to as Housing First or rapid rehousing, which aim to get homeless families into housing quickly, in order to provide an environment where mainstream wraparound services can address the underlying causes of their struggles. This sounds great in theory, and there are aspects of this approach that can certainly work for some families. But more importantly, whether the challenge is mental illness, addiction, abuse, or another factor or factors, dealing with the root issues as opposed to just the outcome — being placed into housing — is what will contribute to a long-term solution that can potentially decrease the need for these services for future generations. In my own family, services including addiction and abuse counseling at the homelessness stage could have had an immediate and long-lasting impact.

In addition, we must attempt to keep children together with their parents whenever possible. While not all mothers or fathers are suitable caregivers, we can teach life and parenting skills when the parent does not endanger the child. In the life of a child, there is no substitute for having a caring parent at home, and we need to do everything possible to preserve those arrangements. While I was actually better off in some ways going to live with my grandmother, who lovingly cared for me, my brother was irreparably harmed by our breakup as a family. Looking back, having the opportunity to stay together as a family unit and receive wraparound services would have likely saved Michael's life. He could have been protected from some of the abuses inflicted during his time in the system,

which led to his own struggles with drug addiction, homelessness, and HIV — and to his tragic death.

Mental health services will play a critical role in ending homelessness and poverty. A significant threat to mental health, especially for children, is the lack of self-esteem caused by catastrophic poverty. My family's situation made me feel insignificant. This feeling, ingrained in me during my formative years, affected me into my adulthood. How can we expect our children to raise themselves from these depths of hopelessness when they don't believe they hold value for the world around them or can be more than the circumstances they were born into?

Generational poverty can be solved. I'm a living example of what can happen when public policy programs, such as food stamps and Section 8, are combined with solid educational opportunities and the influence of adults who believe in their children.

Teaching these children that they are valuable and intelligent and that they have the ability to determine their own futures must be done at home, whether home is a shelter, a private apartment, or another type of dwelling. Services provided to families must include reinforcement of the idea that they hold value and can achieve. School environments must continually strengthen this message as well.

Too often, out of compassion for the struggles homeless boys and girls have encountered through no fault of their own, we reduce the expectations we have for them. We tell them by our words and actions that since they have drawn bad lots in life, it is understandable if they don't achieve. We create a culture of low expectations, reasoning that of course these children won't be able to read as well as others or learn tough subjects, because no one could expect them to overcome their

horrendous circumstances. We may tell ourselves that we wouldn't have been able to achieve in those circumstances, so they couldn't possibly do so either. This is a dangerous fallacy, because for many, education is the only way out of lives of poverty.

The fact is that homeless boys and girls have already been forced to deal with the most horrific difficulties life could throw at them. The abuse, the hunger, the constant moving — those are the hard things. If they are standing in front of you after all of that, there is nothing in the world they cannot do. We need to stop telling these boys and girls things that we wouldn't tell our own children. We would never tell our sons and daughters that it's okay to believe they can't accomplish their dreams. We would never try to convey to them through words or actions that their dreams aren't realistic and that they should lower their expectations. However, every day we diminish the capabilities of the millions of children suffering from poverty by implying that they cannot achieve. While the mountains they need to climb may be higher, and the valleys they travel lower, they can succeed and live productive lives as our neighbors and peers.

When I was sent to live with my grandmother, I was put on a bus alone at the age of nine. She was there to wrap her arms around me when I stepped off that bus. One of the first things she told me was that I had been born into a different America from the one she grew up in, and she asked me what I was going to do with my life. While I may not have understood everything she said at the time, her words let me know that even though my young life was filled with tragedy and pain, I could DO something. Throughout the years I lived with her, she taught me to believe in myself and strive to live

a different life. She not only asked me what I wanted to be when I grew up, she made me believe that it was possible. Sitting with her, watching The Cosby Show and seeing the character Claire Huxtable — the first African-American woman lawyer I had ever seen— made me believe that I could really become a lawyer. Even with my grandmother's love and support, my road to success was rough. Poverty still afflicted me, leading me to make many mistakes, including failing out of college. If this was the case even when I had a more stable and loving environment, then success will be still more challenging to achieve for those who do not have the benefit of this type of intervention. But the recipe for overcoming tough situations is the same for all of us, regardless of background. To be successful we must be able to hold a vision of what our lives can be. Poverty is darkness, obscuring our children's vision of their future. We must continuously and unfailingly shine a light on their potential, to ensure that they never lose sight of their possibilities.

Generational poverty can be solved. I'm a living example of what can happen when public policy programs, such as food stamps and Section 8, are combined with solid educational opportunities and the influence of adults who believe in their children. While counseling during my childhood would have helped me to avoid pitfalls later in life, my experiences can serve as a guide to what is possible. And while the path to ending homelessness and eradicating catastrophic poverty in the United States will be difficult, we have a moral and social imperative to see it through.

http://www.icphusa.org/PDF/uncensored/ICPH_UNCENSORED_5.3%20Fall_101514.pdf

BRINGING CHILD HOMELESSNESS INTO FOCUS: A PHOTO ESSAY

By Craig Blankenhorn

There are 1.6 million homeless children in the United States.

That one statistic was all it took to change my life.

I began taking pictures of homeless families in January 2012, hoping to put a face to the often invisible and forgotten people combating this growing issue. By documenting their daily struggles, I try to show the real people and real suffering that make up the much broader issue of homelessness.

Over the past two years, I've gained a lot of respect for these families. Being homeless is far from easy; it's a 24/7 job that involves moving constantly from one shelter to another, looking for a job, and taking care of children.

There's also the stigma surrounding poverty. Many people would like to believe that the situations of these families are their own doing. The reality, however, is that bad things happen to all of us, be it a job loss, illness, etc. The difference I've seen is that those who become homeless don't have family or a social network to turn to for support when things go wrong. Many don't know how or where to find the resources that are available to them or have barriers in the way of options they do know of.

One of the issues I hear about most frequently from parents is the lack of affordable child care. You can't get a job with kids in tow, but you can't afford child care without a job, creating a Catch-22.

The result is tragic. The choice comes down to remaining unemployed and continuing a life of poverty and homelessness or leaving the children in the care of people they barely know, risking their safety in the process. I've been told stories of children who suffered physical and sexual abuse by the strangers taking care of them.

For the safety of these children, a lot of parents keep them holed up in motel rooms away from danger. Unfortunately, this tactic deprives children of necessary social interaction and mental stimulation.

The age before children even attend school is crucial in their development and future success, but oftentimes young homeless children are stunted in this development. How can children keep up with their peers academically when they face stressful living situations, have little parental involvement, and are continuously switching schools or missing days?

Homeless children are in need of positive role models in their lives. Many of these parents grew up poor or homeless themselves and are teaching their children the same behaviors and attitudes that kept them in poverty, continuing the cycle. One woman I met was never taught proper hygiene. She lost all of her teeth at a young age, adding to her difficulties in finding a job. How many other valuable lessons could she have learned with the right person to look up to?

Legislation to provide federal funding for universal pre-K has been introduced into Congress, following a plan touted by President Obama earlier in the year. (Although the legislation is currently stalled in Congress, the president recently proposed a budget for fiscal year 2015 that allocates \$750 million in funds to pre-K programs.) This seems to be the best and most immediate solution available for the benefit of homeless children across the country. The option to send children to pre-K provides safe child care for parents and offers positive role models, education, social interaction, and development opportunities at a critical age for children—especially the vulnerable population of home-less children who need it the most.

We have a moral obligation to take care of the poor. My primary concern is to bring awareness to the plight of child homelessness and to allow others to witness the pain these children are dealing with on a day-to-day basis as well as their perseverance. My ambition is to create a sociological chronicle of this devastating moment in history through this visual endeavor—and for the world to recognize the unimaginable grief of child homelessness.



The Gerstner Family Scottsdale, Arizona

Despite the stigma surrounding homelessness, the reality is that it can happen to anyone who faces the wrong set of circumstances. Many parents want to work and support their families, if only they can find a job that pays a living wage.

According to Family Promise, the shelter where Syri Gerstner, 41, and her two daughters, Kari, seven, and Kahlyn, eight, are currently staying, there is no city or county anywhere in the United States where a worker making the minimum wage can afford a fair market rate one-bedroom apartment.

Kari is shown here waking up at Family Promise on Christmas morning.

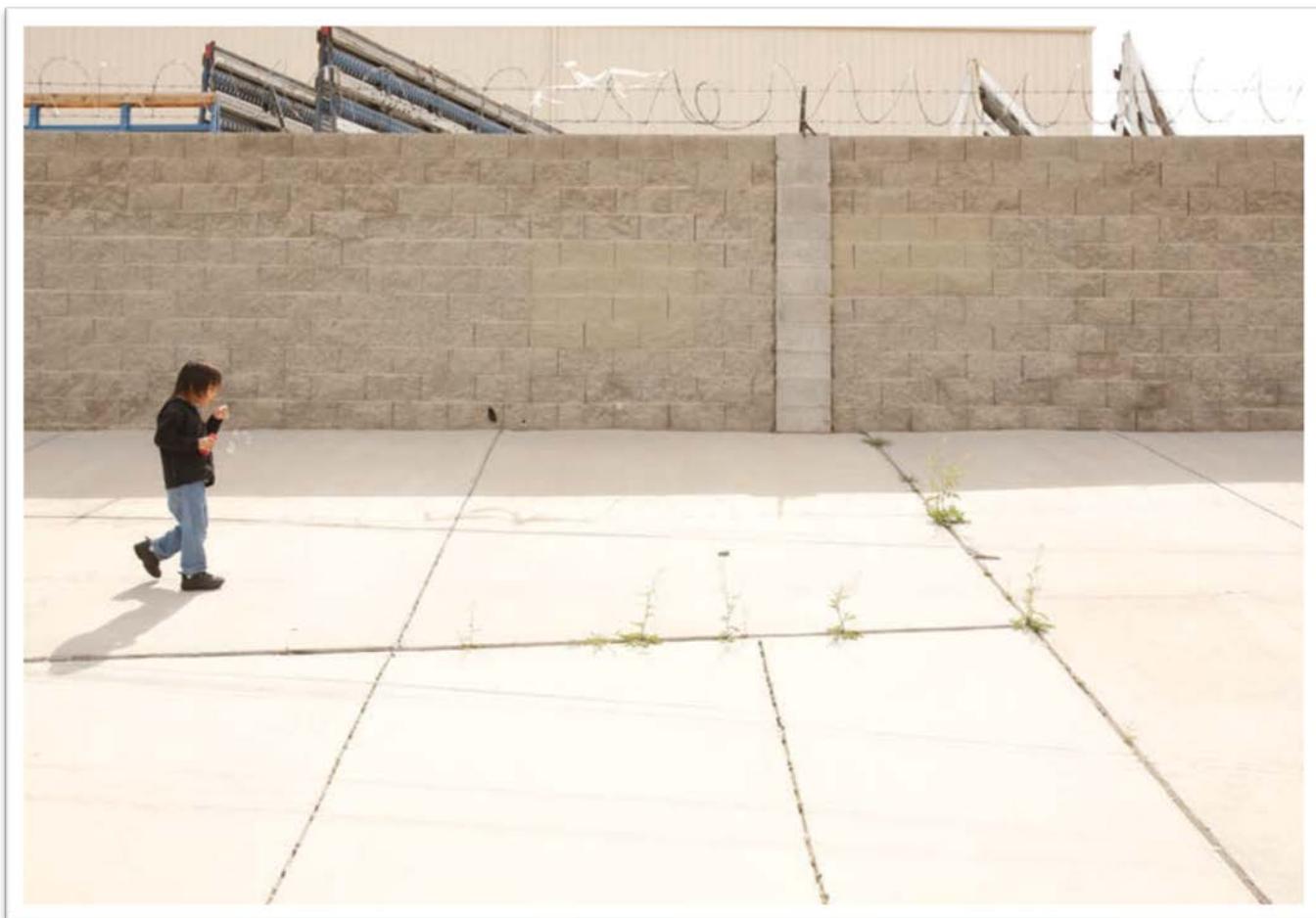
The family had been living in various shelters for two months when I met them. They had never been homeless before and were grateful for the help they received.

"I'm not asking for a handout, because I'm willing to scrub floors. But I shouldn't have to, I'm educated, I'm very personable, I'm not a bad person, and I have some great qualities. Don't just give me food stamps and say, 'It's going to be okay, just hold on to that.' No. Assist me in getting whatever it is that the people who are hiring, want. Don't leave me sitting here floundering, wondering why I feel that my country, the one I used to think was so wonderful and grand, doesn't care about me at all."

The Cariquitan Family, Las Vegas, Nevada

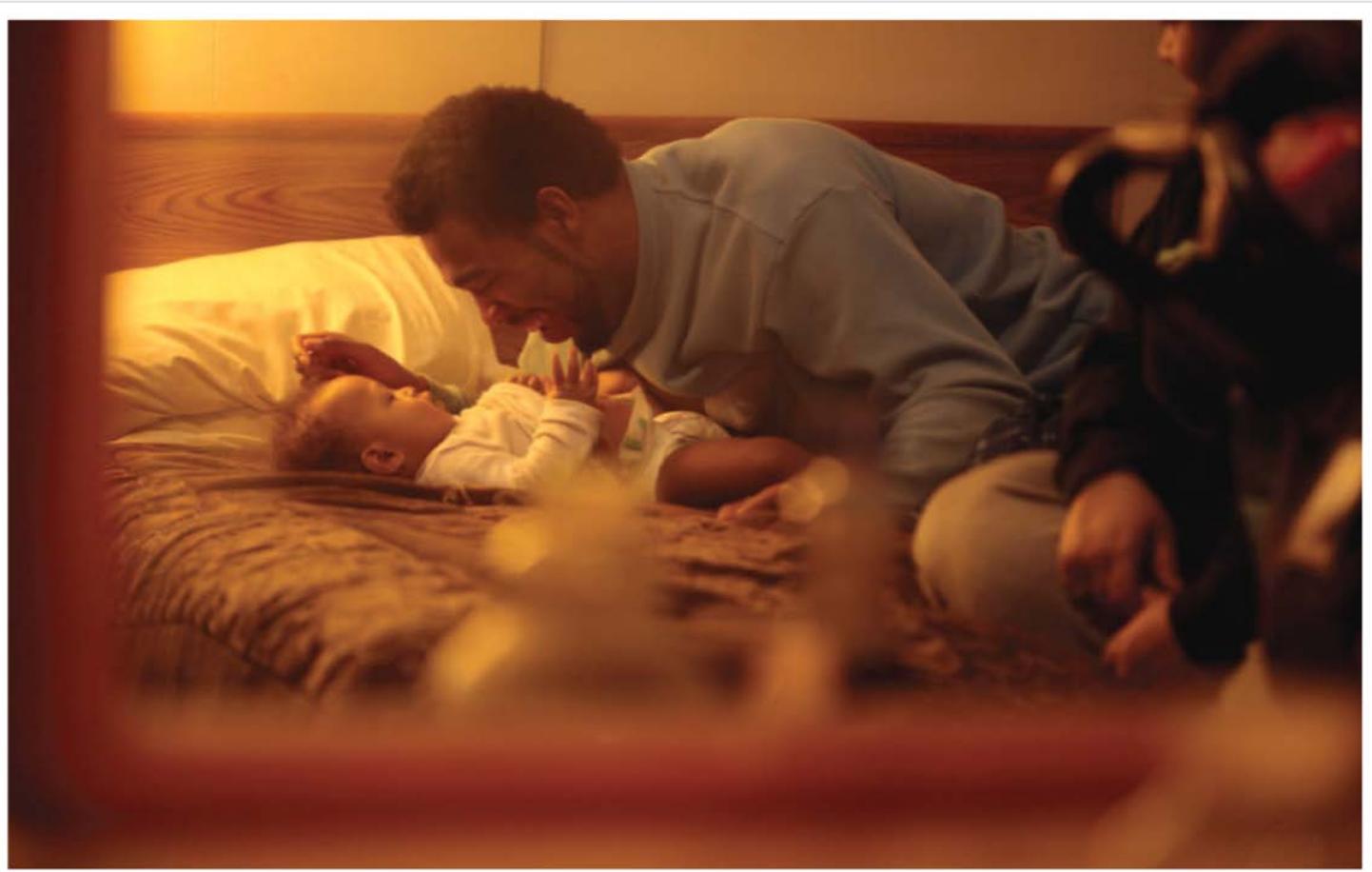
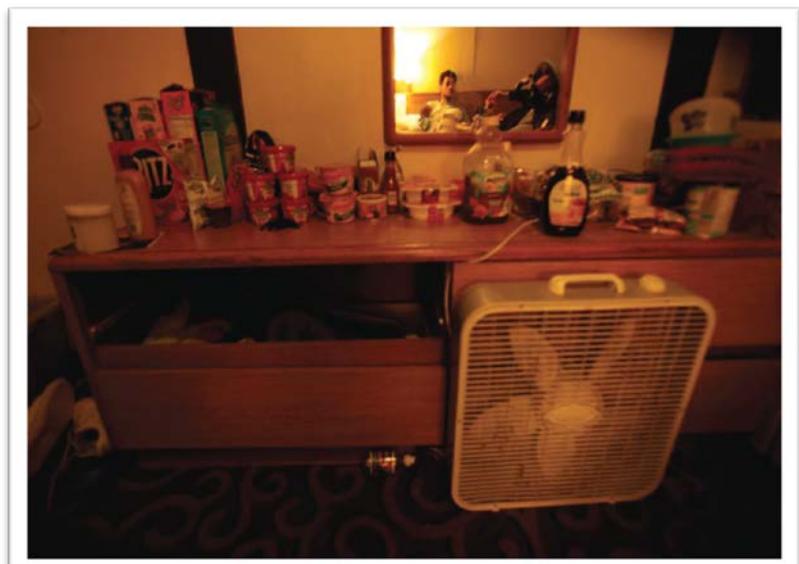
Maria Martha Cariquitan, 35, is a single mother raising her ten-year-old daughter, Francesca, and her six-year-old son, Nathaniel, shown here walking to the Nevada State Welfare office along a notorious area of northern Las Vegas known as the “homeless corridor.” The neighborhood, officially called the Corridor of Hope, is home to several city shelters as well as high numbers of homeless people living on the street.

The family of three is applying for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as food stamps. As of 2012, two in five female-headed families, like the Cariquitan family, lived in poverty. Programs such as SNAP are essential to offset the impact of poverty for these families. Over 47 million people receive SNAP benefits to help them afford an adequate diet. If eligible, Nathaniel and Francesca will join the 22 million other children who rely on these benefits for their health and well-being.



The Coleman Family Janesville, Wisconsin

Ronald Coleman, 23, Jessica Rhodes, 24, who is seven months pregnant, and their son, Greyson, who is eight months old, received a voucher from a Wisconsin homeless coalition to stay at a motel when they became homeless. They are among thousands of families across the country crowding into motels as family homelessness skyrockets and the shelters fill up. Such a lifestyle is problematic, especially for a family with children at such a crucial stage in their development. Poor nutrition is a frequent result of motel living. The lack of a full kitchen severely limits a family's meal options, resulting in the stocking of nonperishable and nutritionally lacking foods such as those shown here or the purchase of inexpensive and unhealthy fast food. Amid the stress and chaos of such a living situation, intimate moments such as the one shown here between Ronald and Greyson are treasured, as they are in all families.





The Keys/Becker Family Livingston, New Jersey

Lack of access to affordable child care is often a major obstacle for families struggling to break out of the cycle of poverty. For Guy Keys, 48, one of approximately 8,000 homeless veterans living in New Jersey, and Amanda Becker, 24, who attend Drake College of Business to become a nurse's aide and a dental technician, respectively, the inability to pay for child care presents a challenge.

Their two daughters, Taneya, four, and Shyla, two, are not yet old enough to attend school, requiring either Guy or Amanda to look after the girls while the other attends class. The family's long day begins when they leave the shelter first thing in the morning with all of the day's meals packed. They then spend the day relying on several shuttles to get from place to place, taking classes, and walking around Newark, New Jersey, with the girls in tow.

Rachel's Family Tampa, Florida

Child care and other types of early education, such as the summer camp Tiffani, seven, shown here, is waiting to attend, offer numerous benefits to homeless children as well as their parents. Tiffani's mother, Rachel, 32, takes the opportunity to attend classes and search for work while her children are safely cared for. The shelter where she and her four children, Keegan, 12, Arianna, ten, Hunter, eight, and Tiffani have been staying has been "more of a family than my own family," according to Rachel.





The Edinger Family Kissimmee, Florida

William Edinger, 44, and Laura Mannetta, 35, had been living in a hotel room for about one year with their three children—Billy, 12, Jessica, ten, and Melissa, two—when I met them. The Edinger children are among the approximately 47,000 members of America's "hotel generation." With very limited safe space to play outdoors, the children have little choice but to stay in their hotel room with their parents. This can deprive children of much-needed mental stimulation and social interaction.

When a family of five shares one hotel room, it is nearly impossible for anyone to have a quiet moment or private conversation. Jessica Edinger, shown here, often uses the space behind the curtain as a temporary "room" to have a moment of privacy. She looks out the window to "imagine sea otters and ducks swimming" in the pond across from the hotel parking lot.

For Runaways, Sex Buys Survival

By IAN URBINA OCT. 26, 2009



Nicole Clark, 17, above, at her onetime sleeping spot. CreditMonica Almeida/The New York Times

ASHLAND, Ore. — She ran away from her group home in Medford, Ore., and spent weeks sleeping in parks and under bridges. Finally, Nicole Clark, 14 years old, grew so desperate that she accepted a young man's offer of a place to stay. The price would come later.

They had sex, and he soon became her boyfriend. Then one day he threatened to kick her out if she did not have sex with several of his friends in exchange for money.

She agreed, fearing she had no choice. "Where was I going to go?" said Nicole, now 17 and living here, just down the Interstate from Medford. That first exchange of money for sex led to a downward spiral of prostitution that lasted for 14 months, until she escaped last year from a pimp who she said often locked her in his garage apartment for months.

"I didn't know the town, and the police would just send me back to the group home," Nicole said, explaining why she did not cut off the relationship once her first boyfriend became a pimp and why she did not flee prostitution when she had the chance. "I'd also fallen for the guy. I felt trapped in a way I can't really explain."



Nicole Clark, right, with Kate Baxted, an outreach worker, who is helping her piece her life back together. As a runaway, Nicole recalled, "I felt trapped in a way I can't really explain." CreditMonica Almeida/The New York Times

Most of the estimated 1.6 million children who run away each year return home within a week. But for those who do not, the desperate struggle to survive often means selling their bodies.

Nearly a third of the children who flee or are kicked out of their homes each year engage in sex for food, drugs or a place to stay, according to [a variety of studies](#) published in academic and public health journals. But this kind of dangerous barter system can quickly escalate into more formalized prostitution, when money changes hands. And then, child welfare workers and police officials say, it becomes extremely difficult to help runaways escape the streets. Many become more entangled in abusive relationships, and the law begins to view them more as teenage criminals than under-age victims.

Estimates of how many children are involved in prostitution vary wildly — ranging from thousands to tens of thousands. More solid numbers do not exist, in part because the Department of Justice has yet to study the matter even though Congress authorized it to do so in 2005 as part of a nationwide study of the illegal commercial sex industry.

But many child welfare advocates and officials in government and law enforcement say that while the data is scarce, they believe that the problem of prostituted children has grown, especially as the Internet has made finding clients easier.

"It's definitely worsening," said Sgt. Kelley O'Connell, a detective who until this year ran the Boston Police Department's human-trafficking unit, echoing a sentiment conveyed in interviews with law

enforcement officials from more than two dozen cities. “Gangs used to sell drugs,” she said. “Now many of them have shifted to selling girls because it’s just as lucrative but far less risky.”

Atlanta, which is one of the only cities where local officials have tried to keep data on the problem, has seen the number of teenage prostitutes working in the city grow to 334 in February from 251 in August 2007.

The barriers to rescuing these children are steep: state cuts to mental health services, child welfare agencies incapable of preventing them from running away, a dearth of residential programs where the children can receive counseling.

After years of abuse, trauma and neglect, the children also tend to trust no one. The longer they are on the streets, experts say, the more likely they are to become involved in crime and uncooperative with the authorities.

“These kids enter prostitution and they literally disappear,” said Bradley Myles, deputy director of the [Polaris Project](#), a nonprofit organization based in Washington that directly serves children involved in prostitution and other trafficking victims. “And in those rare moments that they reappear, it’s in these revolving-door situations where they’re handled by people who have no idea or training in how to help them. So the kids end up right back on the street.”

The Flip Interview

That revolving door is what an F.B.I. agent, Dan Garrabrant, desperately hoped to stop in Interview Room One at the Atlantic City Police Department on Sept. 5, 2006.

Conducting what the police call a “flip” interview, Mr. Garrabrant was trying every tactic he knew to persuade a petite 16-year-old girl named Roxanne L. from Queens, N.Y., to stop being a prostitute and to inform, or flip, on her pimp.

Sending the girl home was not the answer. Home was where her mentally ill, crack-addicted mother lived. Home was where the problems had started.

But Mr. Garrabrant also knew that she would flee if he sent her to a youth shelter. And with her would go his best chance at prosecuting the real criminal, her pimp.

A social worker for six years before joining the F.B.I. almost two decades ago, Mr. Garrabrant has been honored by anti-trafficking experts, prosecutors and the police as one of the best flip interviewers in the country.

On this day, however, he was getting nowhere, according to a recording of the interview and his notes.

While Roxanne had all the signs of being controlled by a pimp — a tattoo with initials on her neck, a rehearsed script about how she was new to the work — she adamantly denied working for anyone.

Mr. Garrabrant had only an hour before the local police would take Roxanne to a shelter. Trying to ease the mood, he started by asking her why she had run away from home. She told him she had been raped by a relative when she was 12 years old. At 14, she left home because her mother’s boyfriend had become abusive.

Soon, running out of time, he zeroed in.

"What's the worst part about working the streets?" he asked.

"Honestly," Roxanne said, giving him a cold stare, "having to look at the tricks and tell if they are cops or not."

"So a pimp never approached you and tried to turn you out?" Mr. Garrabrant asked.

"Yeah, they tried, but I ran," she said, maintaining that she was "renegading," or working without a pimp.

Mr. Garrabrant's task was to get Roxanne to consider leaving her pimp without forcing her to admit she had one. He needed to push hard enough to break her from her rehearsed script, without descending into a frustrating game of wits, a contest in liar's poker. And he had to do all this at exactly the wrong time and place — at the police station after an arrest for solicitation, when the girl felt most panicked and most angry about being treated like a criminal.

"Look, I want to help you," he said, after several failed attempts to get her to acknowledge her pimp. He told her that he might be able to enter her into a residential program in California that offered counseling and classes to girls leaving prostitution.

"Yeah, I know," she said, as she looked down and pensively picked at her nails.

"Give me some time," Mr. Garrabrant pleaded as he handed her a card and asked her to keep it handy. With no time left, he released Roxanne back to the local police, who took her to the youth shelter.

Four hours later, she disappeared. Seventeen days after that, according to the F.B.I, she was found stabbed to death by the pimp she had so adamantly denied existed.

In one of her pockets she had Mr. Garrabrant's card.

"Two days, that's all I needed to get her to stay away from her pimp and I think things would've ended up differently," said Mr. Garrabrant, shaking his head in frustration. "I still don't understand how these guys loop these girls in so far."

A Dangerous Dependency

A runaway's relationship with a pimp does not occur by accident. It takes work.

After using court records to compile a database of over a hundred convicted pimps and where each is incarcerated, The New York Times wrote letters to each more than two years ago. In the ensuing interviews by phone and in letters, more than two dozen convicted and still incarcerated pimps described the complicated roles they played as father figure, landlord, boss and boyfriend to the girls who worked for them. They said they went after girls with low self-esteem, prior sexual experience and a lack of options.

"With the young girls, you promise them heaven, they'll follow you to hell," said Harvey Washington, a pimp who began serving a four-year sentence in Arizona in 2005 for pandering a 17-year-old and three adult prostitutes. "It all depends on her being so love-drunk off of me that she will do anything for me."



Antoin Thurman, who was sentenced in 2006, recalled that as a pimp, he would work to win a girl's trust: "get her nails done, take her to buy an outfit, take her out to eat, make her feel wanted." Credit Jim Hartman, Brand Canyon Company

While most of the pimps said they prefer adult women because teenage runaways involve more legal risks, they added that juveniles fetch higher prices from clients and are far easier to manipulate.

Virtually all the juveniles who become involved in prostitution are runaways and become pimp-controlled, according to law enforcement officials and social workers. Built of desperation and fear, the bonds they form with their pimps are difficult to break. Some girls continue working for pimps even after the pimps are incarcerated.

"The problem is that there is no methadone for a bad relationship," said Rachel Lloyd, a former child prostitute and the director of [Girls Educational and Mentoring Services](#), a program in New York that helps girls escape and stay away from prostitution.

The pimps view themselves as talent managers, not exploiters.

"My job is to make sure she has what she needs, personal hygiene, get her nails done, take her to buy an outfit, take her out to eat, make her feel wanted," said another pimp, Antoin Thurman, who was sentenced in 2006 to three years for pandering and related charges in Buckeye, Ariz. "But I keep the money."

Wayne Banks Jr., a pimp serving at least 40 years in Hazelton, W. Va., for the sex trafficking of a minor and related charges, wrote that the girls have to be convinced that the pimp is best equipped to handle their clients and finances.

"Seems more despicable to me to give something so valuable away as opposed to selling it," he wrote, describing his pitch to persuade girls that prostitution was a smart business decision.

When recruiting, some pimps said they prowled homeless shelters, bus stations and shopping malls or posed in newspaper advertisements as photographers and talent scouts. Others said they worked Internet chat rooms and phone-sex lines.

"I'll look for a younger female with a backpack," said Mr. Thurman, describing how he used to drive near schools after hours. "I'm thinking she's leaving home, she's leaving for a reason, she had a fight with her parents or she just wants to leave home."

Mr. Banks wrote that he preferred using "finders' fees": \$100 to anyone who sent a prospect his way. His only condition was that the girl had to be told up front that he was a pimp.

Runaways are especially attractive recruits because most are already engaging in survival sex for a place to stay, said Evelyn Diaz, who is serving a nine-year sentence in a federal prison in Connecticut for three counts of sex trafficking of minors.

"Some become very loyal to you since you take them under your wing," she wrote.

Controlling girls through beatings or threats was common, but coercion was not an effective basis for a lasting relationship, most pimps emphasized.

"Everything about the game is by choice, not by force," said Bryant Bell, who is serving a four-and-a-half-year sentence in Georgia after pleading guilty in 2002 to helping run a prostitution ring that involved girls as young as 10 years old.

For those girls not already engaged in survival sex, the grooming process was gradual and calculated. At first, the sex is consensual. Before long, the girl is asked to turn occasional tricks to help pay bills.

"I might start by asking her to help me by sleeping with a friend," Mr. Washington said in a telephone interview. "Then I push her from there."

A Better System

Ten years ago, the Dallas Police Department found an average of fewer than 10 minors working as prostitutes every year, along with one pimp working with them. In 2007, the department found 119 girls involved in prostitution and arrested 44 pimps.

The city's child prostitution problem has grown over time. But the bigger reason for the change is how the department handles the cases, using a special unit and some unusual techniques.

Previously, said Sgt. Byron A. Fassett, who leads the department's effort, girls working as prostitutes were handled as perpetrators rather than sexual assault victims. If a 45-year-old man had sex with a 14-year-old girl and no money changed hands, she was likely to get counseling and he was likely to get jail time for statutory rape, Sergeant Fassett said. If the same man left \$80 on the table after having sex with her, she would probably be locked up for prostitution and he would probably go home with a fine as a john.

The department's flip interviews almost always failed, and even if they worked, there was no place to put the girls to receive treatment. Officers resisted investigating what they viewed as a nuisance, not a crime. Prosecutors regularly refused the cases against pimps because the girls made for shaky witnesses and unsympathetic plaintiffs.

Frustrated with this system, Sergeant Fassett started combing through old case files, looking for patterns. One stuck out: 80 percent of the prostituted children the department had handled had run away from home at least four or more times a year.

"It dawned on me, if you want to effectively deal with teen prostitutes, you need to look for repeat runaways," he said.

In 2005, Sergeant Fassett created the "High Risk Victim" unit in the Dallas Police Department, which flags any juvenile in the city who runs away from home four or more times in a given year. About 200 juveniles per year fit that description. If one of those children is picked up by the police anywhere in the country, the child is directed back to Sergeant Fassett's unit, which immediately begins investigating the juvenile's background.

The unit's strength is timing. If the girls are arrested for prostitution, they are at their least cooperative. So the unit instead targets them for such minor offenses as truancy or picks them up as high-risk victims, speaking to them when their guard is down. Only later, as trust builds, do officers and social workers move into discussions of prostitution.

Repeat runaways are not put in juvenile detention but in a special city shelter for up to a month, receiving counseling.

Three quarters of the girls who get treatment do not return to prostitution.

The results of the Dallas system are clear: in the past five years, the Dallas County district attorney's office has on average indicted and convicted or won guilty pleas from over 90 percent of the pimps arrested. In virtually all of those cases, the children involved in the prostitution testified against their pimps, according to the prosecutor's office. Over half of those convictions started as cases involving girls who were picked up by the police not for prostitution but simply as repeat runaways.

In 2007, Congress nearly approved a proposal to spend more than \$55 million for cities to create pilot programs across the country modeled on the Dallas system. But after a dispute with President George W. Bush over the larger [federal budget](#), the plan was dropped and Congress never appropriated the money.

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/27/us/27runaways.html?pagewanted=all&_r=1

Now Think Critically

Chapter 3: *The Realities of Being Homeless: Family and Survival*

1. Why was it significant to Jackie to have somebody ask her what she wanted to be when she grew up? Why is it so hard to be hopeful of your future when you are a homeless youth?
 2. Why did Craig Blankenhorn feel it was so important to do a photo essay of child and family homelessness? Compare the two styles of journalism: photo essays and articles.
 3. What distinguishes a victim from a perpetrator in the eyes of the legal system? How does this ignore the reality of teens experiencing homelessness who enter into prostitution to survive?
 4. Got anything else on your mind? Write it down here.

Chapter 4:

Traditional Versus Innovative Solutions



Direct, Indirect, Research, and Advocacy Engagement

Below are examples of direct, indirect, research, and advocacy engagement activities:

DIRECT ENGAGEMENT engages students in person-to-person contact with those in need.

- Cook/serve/deliver food for the homebound or homeless
- Staff a health clinic
- Teach English as a second language
- Tutor, mentor, or coach youth
- Visit elders in a long term care facility
- Volunteer in a shelter for the homeless

INDIRECT ENGAGEMENT meets a clear need but has benefits to the larger community.

- Plan drug, violence, or disease prevention programs
- Volunteer for disaster services
- Assist with an environmental project
- Participate in urban renewal projects such as mural or house painting
- Build low-income housing
- Fundraise with direct interaction with a nonprofit beneficiary
- Create brochures, flyers, posters, or annual reports for a nonprofit organization

RESEARCH ENGAGEMENT involves students collecting information for public welfare or interest. The research must be done with a direct connection to a community-based organization.

- Work in a laboratory that meets a community need
- Conduct energy audits in public buildings
- Test water to assist with restoration efforts
- Conduct research to protect endangered species
- Conduct research for a community organization

ADVOCACY ENGAGEMENT allows students to lend their voices, writing ability, and other talents toward an issue in the public interest.

- Conduct information campaigns
- Draft legislation that helps or protects the community
- Lobby on behalf of a community issue
- Conduct nonpartisan voter registration drives
- Organize a nonpartisan letter writing campaign for a social

Promising Strategies to End Youth Homelessness

Report to Congress by the Department of Health and Human Services

RHYA Outreach and Gateway Services

Homeless youth are a difficult population to serve as they are often fearful of being forced to return to negative situations - whether in families or institutions - and they tend to be distrustful of adults. RHYA street outreach programs and drop-in centers, administered by ACF, strive to engage youth by providing services that meet their most urgent needs with relatively little structure and few demands. These services are intended to reduce the level of risk youth on the street face and provide a gateway through which hard-to-reach youth can eventually move into more intensive, transitional services.

Street Outreach

A significant number of homeless adolescents spend time living on the street at some point during their homeless experience. Time spent on the street is often associated with exposure to victimization and risky behavior. Street outreach is designed to minimize the negative impact of life on the street for homeless youth.

Generally, street outreach programs target homeless youth who might not otherwise take advantage of needed services because they lack trust in adults and service systems or they do not know how to find services they need. The program goal is to prevent adolescents' exposure to sexual abuse and victimization, as well as prolonged episodes of homelessness. To achieve this goal, street outreach workers go to where homeless youth are likely to congregate, including abandoned buildings, bus stops and other street locations, and work directly with the young people to assess and respond to their needs. Outreach programs offer a variety of services including street-based education, access to emergency shelter, survival supplies such as blankets and food, individual assessments, treatment and counseling, prevention and education activities, information and referrals, crisis intervention, transportation and follow-up support. Practitioners contend that the most effective street outreach programs are those that provide homeless adolescents with access to caring adults who can show them how to maneuver myriad systems through which services and help are provided.

Successful outreach workers are trained in youth development principles, know how to communicate with young people, and are able to respect their personal space. Outreach workers understand the importance of relationship-building, have in-depth knowledge of the operations and services of youth-serving systems (such as social services, juvenile justice, health and education), and are able to connect youth to critical supports and services.¹⁰⁶ Finally, workers know the street culture and can help vulnerable young people develop trusting, positive relationships. When youth are ready, outreach workers help them identify the services they need and link them to those services.

A promising outreach strategy is training peers, or formerly homeless youth, to serve as outreach workers. A peer-to-peer outreach approach is considered particularly effective in finding and identifying homeless adolescents since peer outreach workers typically know the places where street youth gather and can more easily connect and build a rapport with them. Peer models also help foster partnerships between youth and adults, increase self-esteem among peer outreach workers, and provide youth opportunities to participate in service design and delivery.

To most successfully connect street youth to the help they need, outreach workers often travel in a van loaded with supplies to the areas where street youth typically congregate. Mobile outreach activities give outreach workers the flexibility to offer critically needed preventive and urgent health care services, distribute nutritious food and snacks, help youth complete applications for benefits, provide referrals to emergency shelter services, and assist with transportation. In addition to providing services, many street outreach programs are connected to, or coordinate with, drop-in centers, emergency shelters and other youth-serving agencies that further stabilize youth by providing case management, short-term shelter and long-term housing.

Successful outreach programs also engage service providers, neighborhood business owners who have frequent contact with street youth, community leaders, and local police to coordinate services and build cooperation in serving this population.

Collaborative Approaches to Street Outreach

Understanding that one program alone cannot identify all street youth or meet all of their needs, innovative programs have organized collaboratives of agencies conducting street outreach. The goal is to have more trained counselors covering the streets at all hours and to provide appropriate linkages and referrals to homeless youth. Members of the collaborative share current information, conduct joint outreach activities, make appropriate service referrals, and enroll eligible participants in entitlement programs.

Drop-in Centers

Outreach and engagement also take place in drop-in centers. Drop-in centers provide homeless youth with an initial point of contact for a broad range of services and referrals. Drop-in centers meet immediate subsistence needs by providing free meals, showers, laundry facilities, toiletries and new and used clothing. Centers also may provide comprehensive programming and supportive services such as individual assessment, case management, crisis intervention, information and referrals. In addition, in coordination with shelters and other youth-serving programs, drop-in centers provide youth access to housing, legal counsel, and health services. For many vulnerable youth, this approach enables them to control decisions concerning when and how they seek help, including when and how they transition from street life to other residential arrangements.

Peer-to-Peer Models to Reach Homeless Youth

A street outreach program in the Northeast developed a peer outreach component to target youth at risk of becoming homeless. The agency trains youth who have successfully completed one of its programs to do street outreach that specifically targets youth who are in need of services but who might not relate to the agency's professional staff. To

ensure continuity of services and further develop peer workers' skills, peer outreach workers have the opportunity to work in the agency's resource center where they assist with a variety of activities targeted to youth and their families (access to crisis intervention, education, legal and medical services).

Strategies to Engage Homeless Youth

Recognizing the importance of providing youth with a safe and non-threatening space, some drop-in centers encourage youth participation by providing a game room or drop-in room where youth can "hang out" and find some privacy. Others seek to foster a sense of community and connectedness among homeless youth by holding group sessions that allow youth to discuss issues in their lives, as well as conducting activities that allow youth to form friendships and develop trusting relationships with peers and professional staff.

Sheltering and Stabilizing Homeless Youth

Youth shelters that place a strong emphasis on stabilizing youth and reunification with families or other appropriate long-term placements are critical in preventing prolonged episodes of homelessness among this population. Providers report that younger youth and those experiencing their first episode of homelessness are more likely to reconcile with families, if early intervention is available.

Through the Basic Center Program, ACF provides core funding for many emergency shelters throughout the country. Emergency shelters are essential for stabilizing homeless youth, providing a temporary safe haven from victimization and the risks of life on the streets, and intervening quickly to ameliorate the short- and long-term effects of homelessness. Emergency shelters provide youth a safe place to spend the night away from the potentially dangerous environment of adult shelters and street life and serve as an entry point from which youth can access a variety of programs and services. Community-based emergency shelters represent the primary method of intervention for runaway youth and are required to reunify youth with their families.

Shelter programs receiving Basic Center funding serve youth up to age 18, for a maximum of 15 days, and are required to provide room and board, clothing, medical services, individual, group, and family counseling, outreach, and aftercare services and referrals, as appropriate, for youth after they leave shelter. In addition to Basic Center funds, many shelters use other resources, such as local faith-based and community social service support, to provide additional services to homeless youth. Shelters also can provide crisis intervention through assessments, counseling, and case management services. Through crisis intervention, shelters meet young people's immediate needs, stabilize youth, assist them in making decisions about their lives, and reunify youth at risk of homelessness with their families. When family reunification is not possible, however, shelters help youth transition to other appropriate and stable placements.

Research suggests that the first episode of homelessness is a critical time for intervention. Therefore, strong family-centered follow up services to support youth upon reunification with their families is critically important. Addressing issues that led to initial departure can prevent future homeless episodes. Shelters that successfully reunify youth and their families are more likely to develop strategies to engage families in the youth's treatment plan, provide adjunct

youth-family mediation, counseling and other support services to reduce family conflict, address behavioral issues and reduce the risk factors that lead to youth leaving home.

Family Support Services to Reunify Youth and Their Families

Shelters can provide youth and families with group and individual-level counseling by trained professionals (i.e., family therapist) and a peer mentor assigned to the youth upon entry into the program. Through this triage approach, the program seeks to immediately engage youth and families in order to assess specific issues and determine how best to reunify youth with their families. The family therapist is available during the day and evening hours and the peer mentor works with the teen to promote positive decision-making, serve as a role model and engage the youth in experiential learning activities. These services are available to youth and their families during periods of crisis and throughout their engagement with the program.

In addition to short-term crisis interventions and family follow-up and support, promising programs also work with youth to ensure their transition and access to a continuum of supports and services. In some instances, youth work with case managers who link them to housing, jobs, school placements, public benefits, health care, legal assistance and other services as needed.

A Continuum of Care for Homeless Youth To provide youth with the education, employment, and training skills necessary to become self-sufficient, one particularly innovative program developed a comprehensive workforce development initiative available to minors and young adults at its drop-in center, emergency shelter, or transitional living program. Components include:

- Education and employment assessment;
- Employment skill building and career exploration;
- Day labor program;
- Employability skills development through job readiness classes;
- Computer skills training;
- Individualized job placement;
- Pre and post-placement counseling and retention services; and
- Educational advocacy and post-secondary education advising.

The program's separate but integrated components can be accessed individually, enabling participants to utilize those services they need to achieve their employment or educational goals. Participants also may access the components consecutively to progressively develop marketable skills, clear career goals, and a positive attitude and behavioral outlook that will increase their chances of identifying career interests and setting a plan to achieve them. This flexibility allows the program to "meet youth where they are."

While some shelters coordinate with social service providers to facilitate homeless adolescents' access to supportive services, others have the capacity to provide these services on-site. The availability of on-site services not only ensures that youth have access to a continuum of care but also can facilitate tracking and monitoring.

Research has found a number of youth identified barriers which may prevent them from accessing assistance at emergency shelters. Boyer and colleagues found that youth may not seek shelter services because they do not want to comply with program rules (e.g., wake up time, curfew, and drug, alcohol or smoking restrictions), they fear for their safety (i.e., believe they will be victimized) or believe they will be treated badly by program staff. III Then, too, some shelters will not serve homeless youth with presenting or severe problems that may place other youth and shelter staff at-risk.

Although underage youth can stay at a shelter without a parent or guardian, Federal law requires that shelter programs contact a youth's family within 72 hours of a youth's entry into the shelter. This familial contact is a critical step in the reunification process, a primary goal of the Runaway and Homeless Youth program. State laws may also require that programs, particularly licensed shelters, contact a parent or guardian sooner or obtain a parent's consent for a youth to enter the program. Consequently, many shelters require that youth provide proper identification and/or parental contact information upon entry. Studies have found that these eligibility requirements can prevent youth from seeking shelter services.

https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/fysb/youth_homelessness.pdf

Collective Impact

Large-scale social change requires broad cross-sector coordination, yet the social sector remains focused on the isolated intervention of individual organizations.

By John Kania & Mark Kramer *Winter 2011*

The scale and complexity of the U.S. public **education** system has thwarted attempted reforms for decades. Major funders, such as the Annenberg Foundation, **Ford Foundation**, and **Pew Charitable Trusts** have abandoned many of their efforts in frustration after acknowledging their lack of progress. Once the global leader—after World War II the United States had the highest high school graduation rate in the world—the country now ranks 18th among the top 24 industrialized nations, with more than 1 million secondary school students dropping out every year. The heroic efforts of countless teachers, administrators, and **nonprofits**, together with billions of dollars in charitable contributions, may have led to important improvements in individual schools and classrooms, yet system-wide progress has seemed virtually unobtainable.

Against these daunting odds, a remarkable exception seems to be emerging in Cincinnati. Strive, a nonprofit subsidiary of KnowledgeWorks, has brought together local leaders to tackle the student achievement crisis and improve education throughout greater Cincinnati and northern Kentucky. In the four years since the group was launched, Strive partners have improved student success in dozens of key areas across three large public school districts. Despite the recession and budget cuts, 34 of the 53 success indicators that Strive tracks have shown positive trends, including high school graduation rates, fourth-grade reading and math scores, and the number of preschool children prepared for kindergarten.

Why has Strive made progress when so many other efforts have failed? It is because a core group of community leaders decided to abandon their individual agendas in favor of a collective approach to improving student achievement. More than 300 leaders of local organizations agreed to participate, including the heads of influential private and corporate foundations, city government officials, school district representatives, the presidents of eight universities and community colleges, and the executive directors of hundreds of education-related nonprofit and advocacy groups.

These leaders realized that fixing one point on the educational continuum—such as better after-school programs—wouldn’t make much difference unless all parts of the continuum improved at the same time. No single organization, however innovative or powerful, could accomplish this alone. Instead, their ambitious mission became to coordinate improvements at every stage of a young person’s life, from “cradle to career.”

Strive didn’t try to create a new educational program or attempt to convince donors to spend more money. Instead, through a carefully structured process, Strive focused the entire educational community on a single set of goals, measured in the same way. Participating organizations are grouped into 15 different Student Success Networks (SSNs) by type of activity, such as early childhood education or tutoring. Each SSN has been meeting with coaches and facilitators for two hours every two weeks for the past three years, developing shared performance indicators, discussing their progress, and most important, learning from each other and aligning their efforts to support each other.

Strive, both the organization and the process it helps facilitate, is an example of *collective impact*, the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem. Collaboration is nothing new. The social sector is filled with examples of partnerships, networks, and other types of joint efforts. But collective impact initiatives are distinctly different. Unlike most collaborations, collective impact initiatives involve a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants.

Although rare, other successful examples of collective impact are addressing social issues that, like education, require many different players to change their behavior in order to solve a complex problem. In 1993, Marjorie Mayfield Jackson helped found the Elizabeth River Project with a mission of cleaning up the Elizabeth River in southeastern Virginia, which for decades had been a dumping ground for industrial waste. They engaged more than 100 stakeholders, including the city governments of Chesapeake, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Virginia Beach, Va., the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the U.S. Navy, and dozens of local businesses, schools, community groups, environmental organizations, and universities, in developing an 18-point plan to restore the watershed. Fifteen years later, more than 1,000 acres of watershed land have been conserved or restored, pollution has been reduced by more than 215 million pounds, concentrations of the most severe carcinogen have been cut sixfold, and water quality has significantly improved. Much remains to be done before the river is fully restored, but already 27 species of fish and oysters are thriving in the restored wetlands, and bald eagles have returned to nest on the shores.

Or consider Shape up Somerville, a citywide effort to reduce and prevent childhood obesity in elementary school children in Somerville, Mass. Led by Christina Economos, an associate professor at Tufts University's Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy, and funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts, and United Way of Massachusetts Bay and Merrimack Valley, the program engaged government officials, educators, businesses, nonprofits, and citizens in collectively defining wellness and weight gain prevention practices. Schools agreed to offer healthier foods, teach nutrition, and promote physical activity. Local restaurants received a certification if they served low-fat, high nutritional food. The city organized a farmers' market and provided healthy lifestyle incentives such as reduced-price gym memberships for city employees. Even sidewalks were modified and crosswalks repainted to encourage more children to walk to school. The result was a statistically significant decrease in body mass index among the community's young children between 2002 and 2005.

Even companies are beginning to explore collective impact to tackle social problems. Mars, a manufacturer of chocolate brands such as M&M's, Snickers, and Dove, is working with NGOs, local governments, and even direct competitors to improve the lives of more than 500,000 impoverished cocoa farmers in Cote d'Ivoire, where Mars sources a large portion of its cocoa. Research suggests that better farming practices and improved plant stocks could triple the yield per hectare, dramatically increasing farmer incomes and improving the sustainability of Mars's supply chain. To accomplish this, Mars must enlist the coordinated efforts of multiple organizations: the Cote d'Ivoire government needs to provide more agricultural extension workers, the World Bank needs to finance new roads, and bilateral donors need to support NGOs in improving health care, nutrition, and education in cocoa growing communities. And Mars must find ways to work with its direct competitors on pre-competitive issues to reach farmers outside its supply chain.

These varied examples all have a common theme: that large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from the isolated intervention of individual organizations. Evidence of the effectiveness of this approach is still limited, but these examples suggest that substantially greater progress could be made in alleviating many of our most serious and complex social problems if nonprofits, governments, businesses, and the public were brought together around a common agenda to create collective impact. It doesn't happen often, not because it is impossible, but because it is so rarely attempted. Funders and nonprofits alike overlook the potential for collective impact because they are used to focusing on independent action as the primary vehicle for social change.

ISOLATED IMPACT

Most funders, faced with the task of choosing a few grantees from many applicants, try to ascertain which organizations make the greatest contribution toward solving a social problem. Grantees, in turn, compete to be chosen by emphasizing how their individual activities produce the greatest effect. Each organization is judged on its own potential to achieve impact, independent of the numerous other organizations that may also influence the issue. And when a grantee is asked to evaluate the impact of its work, every attempt is made to isolate that grantee's individual influence from all other variables.

In short, the nonprofit sector most frequently operates using an approach that we call *isolated impact*. It is an approach oriented toward finding and funding a solution embodied within a single organization, combined with the hope that the most effective organizations will grow or replicate to extend their impact more widely. Funders search for more effective interventions as if there were a cure for failing schools that only needs to be discovered, in the way that medical cures are discovered in laboratories. As a result of this process, nearly 1.4 million nonprofits try to invent independent solutions to major social problems, often working at odds with each other and exponentially increasing the perceived resources required to make meaningful progress. Recent trends have only reinforced this perspective. The growing interest in venture **philanthropy** and **social entrepreneurship**, for example, has greatly benefited the social sector by identifying and accelerating the growth of many high-performing nonprofits, yet it has also accentuated an emphasis on scaling up a few select organizations as the key to social progress.

Despite the dominance of this approach, there is scant evidence that isolated initiatives are the best way to solve many social problems in today's complex and interdependent world. No single organization is responsible for any major social problem, nor can any single organization cure it. In the field of education, even the most highly respected nonprofits—such as the Harlem Children's Zone, Teach for America, and the Knowledge Is Power Program (KIPP)—have taken decades to reach tens of thousands of children, a remarkable achievement that deserves praise, but one that is three orders of magnitude short of the tens of millions of U.S. children that need help.

The problem with relying on the isolated impact of individual organizations is further compounded by the isolation of the nonprofit sector. Social problems arise from the interplay of governmental and commercial activities, not only from the behavior of social sector organizations. As a result, complex problems can be solved only by cross-sector coalitions that engage those outside the nonprofit sector.

We don't want to imply that all social problems require collective impact. In fact, some problems are best solved by individual organizations. In "Leading Boldly," an article we wrote with Ron Heifetz for the winter 2004 issue of the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, we described the difference between *technical problems* and *adaptive problems*. Some social problems are technical in that the problem is well defined, the answer is known in advance, and one or a few organizations have the ability to implement the solution. Examples include funding college scholarships, building a hospital, or installing inventory

controls in a food bank. Adaptive problems, by contrast, are complex, the answer is not known, and even if it were, no single entity has the resources or authority to bring about the necessary change. Reforming public education, restoring wetland environments, and improving community health are all adaptive problems. In these cases, reaching an effective solution requires learning by the stakeholders involved in the problem, who must then change their own behavior in order to create a solution.

Shifting from isolated impact to collective impact is not merely a matter of encouraging more collaboration or public-private partnerships. It requires a systemic approach to social impact that focuses on the relationships between organizations and the progress toward shared objectives. And it requires the creation of a new set of **nonprofit management** organizations that have the skills and resources to assemble and coordinate the specific elements necessary for collective action to succeed.

The Five Conditions of Collective Impact

Common Agenda	All participants have a shared vision for change including a common understanding of the problem and a joint approach to solving it through agreed upon actions.
Shared Measurement	Collecting data and measuring results consistently across all participants ensures efforts remain aligned and participants hold each other accountable.
Mutually Reinforcing Activities	Participant activities must be differentiated while still being coordinated through a mutually reinforcing plan of action.
Continuous Communication	Consistent and open communication is needed across the many players to build trust, assure mutual objectives, and create common motivation.
Backbone Support	Creating and managing collective impact requires a separate organization(s) with staff and a specific set of skills to serve as the backbone for the entire initiative and coordinate participating organizations and agencies.

Using Collective Impact to End Homelessness

If a community wants to achieve something breathtaking, getting the right sectors to the table is a great place to start.

By [Becky Kanis](#) Oct. 14, 2011

Earlier this year, a colleague handed me the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* article “[Collective Impact](#).” Intuitively, I knew that the basic premise—that large-scale change requires broad cross-sector coordination—was true from my work on [Community Solutions’ 100,000 Homes Campaign](#); however, thanks to a recent survey that we conducted with the [National Alliance to End Homelessness](#), we now have some preliminary data to support it further.

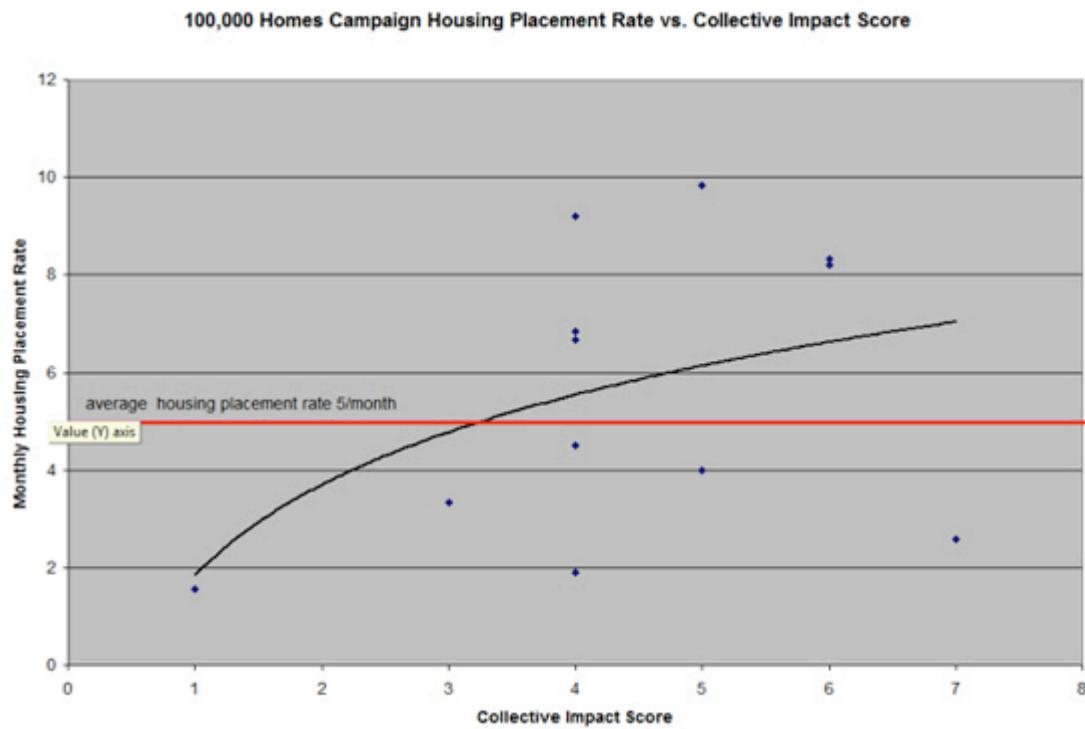
With 100,000 Homes, any organization can enroll its community in the campaign, as long as it is committed to the shared aim of finding and housing the most vulnerable homeless people in their community. We recruit and work closely with leaders from all four sectors—nonprofits, local government, business, and philanthropy.

We have been curious, though, about the extent to which having representation on the local 100,000 Homes Campaign impacts the results that the team is able to achieve. Recently, our partners at the National Alliance to End Homelessness worked with us to create a survey of 100,000 Homes Campaign teams. We wanted to find out which sector led each local team and which sectors comprised them, as well as the extent to which they worked effectively with local Veterans Affairs offices and local public housing authorities (two tremendous sources of housing supply).

Nineteen out of ninety-five communities (20 percent) responded to the survey. We screened out communities that had not yet completed their “Registry Week”, in which volunteers canvass the streets for three mornings to create a by-name list of everyone experiencing homelessness and to administer a survey (called the Vulnerability Index) to determine the fragility of their health.

Of the remaining twelve communities, we created a “collective impact score,” which gives one point for each of the following sectors represented on their campaign leadership team: Veterans Administration, public housing authority, local government, Continuum of Care (a coordinating body for federal homeless grant applications), Business Improvement District, nonprofits, and philanthropists. A total of 7 points is possible on the collective impact score. We weighted it to allow additional points for inclusion of the Veterans Administration and public housing authority, because we believe that their participation is critical to large-scale systems change in solving chronic homelessness. We then compared the collective impact score to the communities’ monthly housing placement rate—that is, the average number of vulnerable people they move into permanent housing each month.

The chart below demonstrates a modest positive correlation between the collective impact score and the community's housing placement rate.



Note that no communities with a collective impact score below 4 had a placement rate above the average of 5 vulnerable people per month; however, there were two outlier communities with more than 4 sectors on their local campaign team that were under-achieving in terms of housing placement and impact. One of those communities is early in their involvement in the 100,000 Homes Campaign and currently in the process of significant community dialogue toward an even deeper collective impact approach. The other community is struggling with securing full alignment with their nonprofit partners. Clearly there are factors beyond simply having the right sectors at the table for creating significant impact in ending homelessness; however, this early look at the data indicates that if a community wants to have the best chance at truly achieving something breathtaking, getting the right sectors to the table and actively engaged is a great place to start.

Stanford Social Review:

http://ssir.org/articles/entry/using_collective_impact_to_end_homelessness#sthash.TiAEF5qi.dpuf

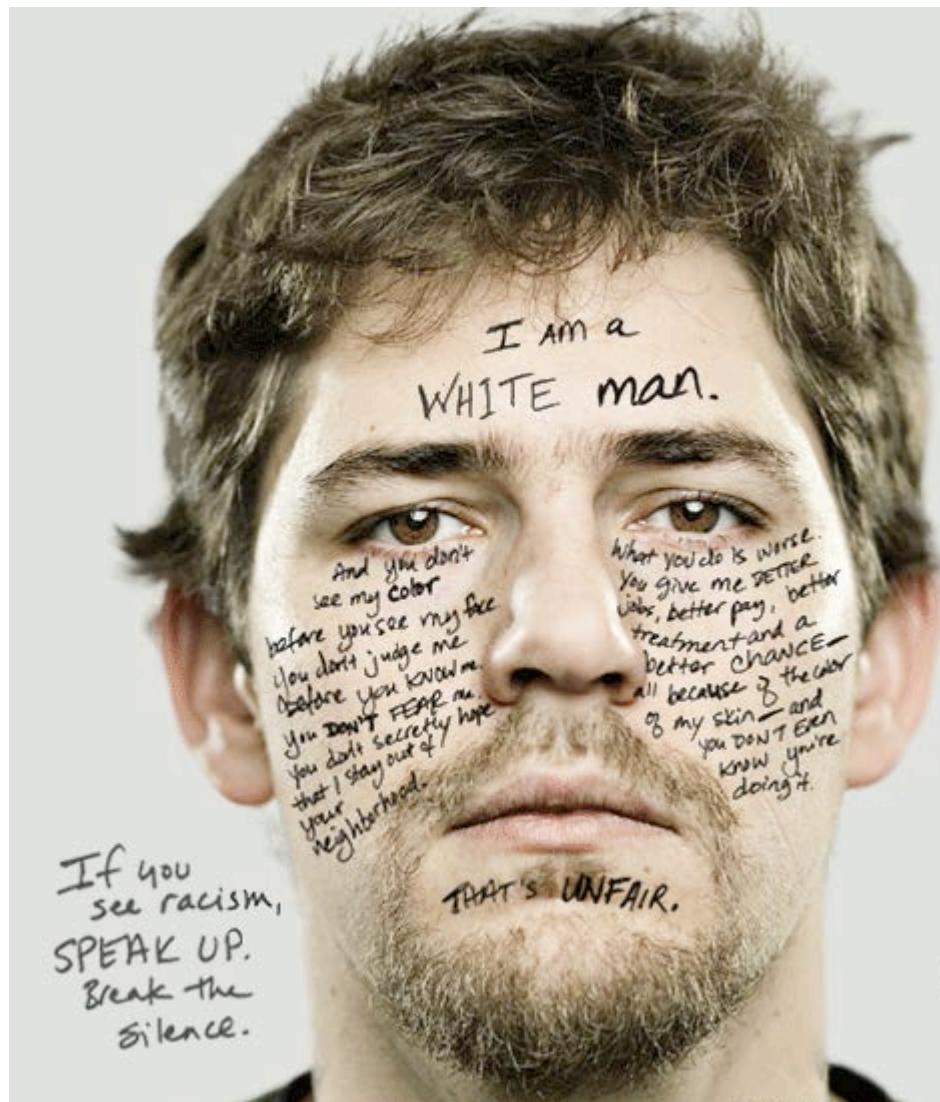
Now Think Critically

Chapter 4: Traditional Vs. Innovative Solutions

1. Describe in your own words the difference between direct and indirect service.
 2. How does collective impact differ from the traditional approach described in the first article: *Promising Strategies to End Youth Homelessness*?
 3. How can we apply the concept of collective impact to the alleviation of the problem of youth homelessness?
 4. Got anything else on your mind? Write it down here.

Chapter 5:

Recognizing Our Privilege



Explaining White Privilege to a Broke White Person

By Gina Crosley-Corcoran

Posted: 05/08/2014 12:57 pm EDT Updated: 09/03/2014 11:59 am EDT

Years ago some feminist on the Internet told me I was "privileged."

"THE F&CK!?!?" I said.

I came from the kind of poor that people don't want to believe still exists in this country. Have you ever spent a frigid northern-Illinois winter without heat or running water? I have. At 12 years old were you making ramen noodles in a coffee maker with water you fetched from a public bathroom? I was. Have you ever lived in a camper year-round and used a random relative's apartment as your mailing address? We did. Did you attend so many different elementary schools that you can only remember a quarter of their names? Welcome to my childhood.

So when that feminist told me I had "white privilege," I told her that my white skin didn't do shit to prevent me from experiencing poverty. Then, like any good, educated feminist would, she directed me to Peggy McIntosh's now-famous 1988 piece "[White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack](#)."

After one reads McIntosh's powerful essay, it's impossible to deny that being born with white skin in America affords people certain unearned privileges in life that people of other skin colors simply are not afforded. For example:

"I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented."

"When I am told about our national heritage or about 'civilization,' I am shown that people of my color made it what it is."

"If a traffic cop pulls me over or if the IRS audits my tax return, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race."

"I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time."



If you read through the rest of the list, you can see how white people and people of color experience the world in very different ways. But listen: This is not said to make white people feel guilty about their privilege. It's not your fault that you were born with white skin and experience these privileges. But whether you realize it or not, you *do* benefit from it, and it *is* your fault if you don't maintain awareness of that fact.

I do understand that McIntosh's essay may rub some people the wrong way. There are several points on the list that I felt spoke more to the author's status as a middle-class person than to her status as a white person. For example:

"If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area, which I can afford and in which I would want to live."

"I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me."

"I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed."

"If I want to, I can be pretty sure of finding a publisher for this piece on white privilege."

And there are so many more points in the essay where the word "class" could be substituted for the word "race," which would ultimately paint a very different picture. That is why I had such a hard time identifying with this essay for so long. When I first wrote about white privilege years ago, I demanded to know why this white woman felt that my experiences were the same as hers when, no, my family most certainly could not rent housing "in an area which we could afford and want to live," and no, I couldn't go shopping without fear in our low-income neighborhoods.

The idea that any ol' white person can find a publisher for a piece is most certainly a symptom of class privilege. Having come from a family of people who didn't even graduate from high school, who knew not a single academic or intellectual person, it would never occur to me to assume that I could be published. It is absolutely a freak anomaly that I'm in graduate school, considering that not one person on either side of my family has a college degree. And it took me until my 30s to ever believe that someone from my stock could achieve such a thing. Poverty colors nearly everything about your perspective on opportunities for advancement in life. Middle-class, educated people assume that anyone can achieve their goals if they work hard enough. Folks steeped in poverty rarely see a life past working at the gas station, making the rent on their trailer, and self-medicating with cigarettes and prescription drugs until they die of a heart attack. (I've just described one whole side of my family and the life I assumed I'd be living before I lucked out of it.)

I, maybe more than most people, can completely understand why broke white folks get pissed when the word "privilege" is thrown around. As a child I was constantly discriminated against because of my poverty, and those wounds still run very deep. But luckily my college education introduced me to a more nuanced concept of privilege: the term "intersectionality." The concept of intersectionality recognizes that people can be privileged in some ways and definitely not privileged in others. There are many different types of privilege, not just skin-color privilege, that impact the way people can move through the world or are discriminated against. These are all things you are born into, not things you earned, that afford you opportunities that others may not have. For example:

Citizenship: Simply being born in this country affords you certain privileges that non-citizens will never access.

Class: Being born into a financially stable family can help guarantee your health, happiness, safety, education, intelligence, and future opportunities.

Sexual orientation: If you were born straight, every state in this country affords you privileges that non-straight folks have to fight the Supreme Court for.

Sex: If you were born male, you can assume that you can walk through a parking garage without worrying that you'll be raped and then have to deal with a defense attorney blaming it on what you were wearing.

Ability: If you were born able-bodied, you probably don't have to plan your life around handicap access, braille, or other special needs.

Gender identity: If you were born cisgender (that is, your gender identity matches the sex you were assigned at birth), you don't have to worry that using the restroom or locker room will invoke public outrage.

As you can see, belonging to one or more category of privilege, especially being a straight, white, middle-class, able-bodied male, can be like winning a lottery you didn't even know you were playing. But this is not to imply that any form of privilege is exactly the same as another, or that people lacking in one area of privilege understand what it's like to be lacking in other areas. Race discrimination is not equal to sex discrimination and so forth.

And listen: Recognizing privilege doesn't mean suffering guilt or shame for your lot in life. Nobody's saying that straight, white, middle-class, able-bodied males are all a bunch of assholes who don't work hard for what they have. Recognizing privilege simply means being aware that some people have to work much harder just to experience the things you take for granted (if they ever can experience them at all).

I know now that I *am* privileged in many ways. I am privileged as a natural-born white citizen. I am privileged as a cisgender woman. I am privileged as an able-bodied person. I am privileged that my first language is also our national language, and that I was born with an intellect and ambition that pulled me out of the poverty that I was otherwise destined for. I was privileged to be able to marry my way "up" by partnering with a privileged, middle-class, educated male who fully expected me to earn a college degree.

There are a million ways I experience privilege, and some that I certainly don't. But thankfully, intersectionality allows us to examine these varying dimensions and degrees of discrimination while raising awareness of the results of multiple systems of oppression at work.

Tell me: Are you a white person who's felt uncomfortable with the term "white privilege"? Does a more nuanced approach help you see your own privilege more clearly?

Frequently (Un)Asked Questions about Being a Scholar Activist

A Letter by Laura Pulido

Dear Potential Scholar Activist,

I am taking this opportunity to write an open letter to all those contemplating or in the early stages of an academic career and wondering if and how they can negotiate the seemingly disparate demands of political engagement and academic performance. I decided to do so because I am routinely asked—generally by activist graduate students whom I don’t know—about how I reconcile the two. To be perfectly frank, I rarely know how to respond. I often answer in generalities, such as “You need to follow your heart,” which, while certainly true, does not begin to address the complexities involved. Accordingly, I thought I would use this chapter to answer some of the most frequently asked questions that I receive, as well as some questions that I am not asked but that any person considering becoming a scholar activist would do well to consider.

Before I get into the substance of the letter, I will share a bit about myself, since most of you have never met me and some background will hopefully provide a context for my comments. I am a professor at an aspiring research university in Los Angeles, the University of Southern California (USC). I have a joint appointment in geography and American studies and ethnicity, and most of my research centers on questions of race, political activism, social movements, Chicano/Latino studies, and environmental justice. I identify as a Chicana and native Angeleno—facts that shape a good deal of who I am as a scholar, activist, and human being. While I have always had strong political views, it was not until I entered graduate school in the 1980s that I became politically active. The impetus to get involved stemmed from several sources, including my eagerness to understand how people transform the world, as well as my own commitment to antiracism, workers’ rights, and anticapitalist politics. I do not recall when I realized that I needed to both study political activism and be politically active myself, but that notion has been a central part of who I have been since graduate school.

Needless to say, there are many different ways to pursue oppositional scholarship and politics. The form of my own practice and the focus of this letter is what Ruth Wilson Gilmore (1993, 73) calls “organic praxis.” Gilmore has identified several tendencies among oppositional scholars, including individual careerism, romantic particularism, luxury production, and organic praxis. Both individual careerism and luxury production emphasize theory production at the cost of disconnection from larger movements for social change. There is nothing wrong with such work, and its practitioners have made many contributions to our understanding of how the world works. Indeed, universities are all too happy to promote this type of scholarship, especially among scholars of color. Romantic particularism, another tendency within oppositional work, is distinctly counterhegemonic but hesitates to portray the marginalized in all their complexity, a serious omission. Both rigorous scholarship and committed action demand that we identify and analyze the contradictions that are present in all social formations. The final tendency, which I will be referring to throughout this letter, is organic praxis. Gilmore defines oppositional work as “talk-plus-walk: it is [the] organization and promotion of ideas and bargaining in the political arena” (71). What distinguishes organic praxis is “the walk,” or more specifically, political bargaining. Whether the bargaining takes place on campus or in the larger community is irrelevant; the point is that the scholar is somehow connected to oppositional action beyond that of writing for academic audiences.

Over the course of my career, I have been involved in several different movements and organizations primarily in Southern California. These include labor, environmental justice, and social justice groups. I have never been the leader of a major organization, nor am I an academic star: I am an average-performing academic who has tried to keep one foot firmly in academia, the other grounded in community struggles and institutions—in addition to trying to maintain some semblance of a personal life (the latter being a more recent development).

Certainly there is nothing exceptional in what I do, but for several reasons students have identified me as a scholar activist and frequently ask for my advice. One reason I am queried about such matters is that I come from a relatively small discipline, geography, where activists readily stand out. Likewise, I come from an exceedingly white discipline, where vocal people of color attract attention. Also, some young scholars are genuinely curious as to how I negotiate the challenges posed by conducting ethnographic work with people I am politically involved with. While there are many other academics operating within such a framework, I realize that the potentially dehumanizing process of graduate education results in many students eager for role models and alternative ways of being.¹ Consequently, I hope that this chapter will be a small contribution toward helping scholars and activists think through some of the implications of being a scholar activist.

I have structured the letter around six major questions and themes. Topics range from the very practical, such as how to balance the competing demands of academia, to the more abstract, including negotiating the ethical minefields of ethnography, to the personal, such as the need to be honest with yourself. While such an approach is less than ideal in that it may appear scattered and incoherent, I trust my instincts and experience that these are some of the key things that graduate students and newly minted PhDs need to be aware of as they go about the business of building their academic and political lives.

Question 1: How does your department/university respond to your political work?

ANSWER: This is easily the most frequently asked question that I receive. Clearly, people assume that institutions oppose counterhegemonic activist and scholarly work. Indeed, many are genuinely surprised when I explain that for the most part I have not faced any real problems from my administration. It is not that I happen to teach at some enlightened institution; rather, a variety of circumstances, both fortuitous and deliberately chosen, have provided me with the space necessary to be a scholar activist. I will discuss three of the factors that have contributed to this situation: colleagues, a solid publication record, and my sense of self.

For the most part I have been blessed with colleagues who, though they may not always agree with what I do and how I do it, respect the notion of academic freedom (if not the actual work that I do). The scope of appropriate academic activity has been defined broadly in my fields of geography (partly because of its connection to planning) and American studies and ethnicity (because of the activist roots of ethnic studies; Omatsu 1994), providing me with ample room to be a scholar activist. While I am certain that some colleagues disagree with my politics, they have for the most part been professional and respectful. Moreover, I have several senior colleagues who are also scholar activists in their own right, and I suspect that they have been instrumental in paving the way for more junior colleagues to pursue such a path. They have set a high standard of both scholarship and social commitment, showing that the two are not mutually exclusive, and this, in turn, has made my life much easier. While there is an element of luck to my situation regarding my colleagues—I know many who are not so fortunate—the truth is that I carefully considered it when I first began searching for a new job. I was not interested in the most prestigious university or the best geography program; rather, I was looking for a place that was in Los Angeles and that would allow me to flourish as a scholar activist. Because of the reputation of some of my senior colleagues, I thought that USC would be a potential fit, and I was right: not only was I fortunate, but I chose well.

A second reason that I have not encountered serious problems from my institution is that I have maintained a steady publication record, which, regardless of what anyone says, is the primary thing that academics get evaluated on at research universities (Goldsmith, Komlos, and Schine Gold 2001, ch. 7). Mine is not a great record certainly I publish far less than some of my more “productive” colleagues but it is solid and entirely acceptable. I strongly suspect that had I not published on terms satisfactory to the institution, I might well have encountered far greater problems. Thus, to a certain extent, the publication record has served as a shield of sorts. Though a strong publication record will not protect you if the institution is intent on getting rid of you, it is the first line of defense. If the publication record is “weak,” however that is defined by the powers that be, that will be the first and potentially easiest way for the institution to eliminate you (Winkler 2000, 744). This applies to all scholar activists, but particularly to scholars of color, who often publish in journals deemed “marginal to the discipline” by hostile forces. Knowing this, I consciously built a solid publication record so that the university would have a relatively hard time dismissing me.

A final factor contributing to my limited experience of institutional conflict stems from my own perception of the situation. A strong sense of self, clarity of purpose, and knowledge of my priorities have helped buffer me against institutional pressures. I realize that this factor is much more subjective than the first two mentioned and that it edges toward relativism. But upon surveying my own experience as well as that of others, I am convinced that my sense of purpose and identity my knowledge of who I was, who I wanted to be, and how that translated into particular behaviors has helped minimize my experience of institutional conflict. This does not imply that conflict doesn’t exist, only that I do not experience it as an acute problem.

A telling moment came when I was up for tenure. At that time the janitorial and food-service workers on my campus had become deeply embroiled in a contract stalemate with the administration. The main issue was subcontracting, and the unions, both of which were composed of low wage workers of color, initiated community-based campaigns to pressure the administration into accepting a more favorable contract. I, along with several other faculty, became deeply involved in the campaign. I routinely brought the workers and union organizers to my classes; I organized class research projects around the issues; I encouraged students to organize and get involved; I was part of a small group that tried to get other faculty to pressure the administration; I participated in marches, rallies, and civil disobedience actions and eventually helped organize and participated in a campus-wide fast in support of the workers. These activities began approximately two years before I was up for tenure and continued until the year after I received it. Because of the timing, the university had the perfect opportunity to get rid of me. I knew that I was in a vulnerable position, but I also knew that I could not refrain from involvement—What kind of person would I be? I would not be the person that I wanted to be or saw myself as. Could I live with myself? I reached two important conclusions that helped me chart a course of action: I decided, first, that I had to be involved, and second, that I deserved tenure. For me, convincing myself that I deserved tenure was a bigger hurdle than actually getting it. Once I was clear on those matters, I could readily identify my fears, assess their significance and meaning for me, and, eventually, move beyond them. In this instance, the worst-case scenario was my not getting tenure, but what it meant for me had changed—I no longer interpreted tenure denial as a negative judgment of me or my performance. I knew that such an act would be politically motivated and not a true reflection of my record and abilities. I could live with that. I decided that if I was denied tenure I would fight it in court. Once I understood the objective forces arrayed against me, my various options, and the emotions driving those choices, my course of action became not only apparent but comfortable.

I do not wish to imply that all or even most problems scholar activists face are due to their own perceptions of the problem. I have seen and heard all too many instances when administrators go after faculty in the most brutal fashion. So let’s be clear—witch hunts and retaliation do exist. But there is a sizable gray area between such hostile actions and how individuals choose to experience the situation. This gray area is shaped not only by circumstances over which we have no control but also by our identity, sense of purpose, and ability to be honest

with ourselves. Rest assured, as a scholar activist you will be tried, but if you are clear in your convictions, then the crisis will not be quite so traumatic; it becomes just an episode, though a potentially difficult one. If, on the other hand, deep down inside you are less than sure of what you are about, then that event may indeed become a crisis forcing you to acknowledge the truth of who you really are.

Question 2: How does one combine scholarship and activism?

ANSWER: Although such a question may appear to be relatively straightforward, in reality it is anything but. This is because how you combine scholarship and activism is linked to how you construct your life. In my case, building an integrated life has been a key part of being a scholar activist.

Allow me to begin with an often overlooked issue that has emerged as crucial to me: place. Perhaps because I am a geographer I have realized the need to deal with the reality and limitations imposed by space. Place figures two ways in my life. First, I do not traverse space particularly well, and, second, I am passionate about the place where I live, Los Angeles. Such a confluence of circumstances, while seemingly mundane, has made it relatively easy for me to build an integrated set of research, teaching, and political activities centered in one geographical location. This, in turn, has provided a convenient framework for my life as a scholar activist.

I did not initially consider space to be a relevant issue in shaping my political and academic work, but over time I discovered its importance. My dissertation research, which explored environmental activism among working-class Chicanas/os, focused on two specific places, northern New Mexico and central California. I realized quickly the conflict between my life as a researcher and my life as a political activist: if I wished to work with and become a committed member of those communities, this would entail a particular type of energy expenditure that was especially difficult for me—traveling. As much as I like seeing new places and meeting new people, travel is stressful on my body and usually results in some illness afterwards. For a long time I denied this fact and pushed myself, insisting that this was simply what politically committed academics did. Indeed, travel has essentially become a job requirement for all scholars. Eventually I acknowledged that traveling was not sustainable for me, and I began to locate most of my activities at home. Of course, there are many ways I could have been a scholar activist from a distance, including doing applied research, advocacy work, and fund-raising, for example. While I was not averse to doing such things, such an arrangement would have precluded me from being part of the everyday life of an organization or movement, which has been paramount to me (more on that later).

Thankfully, not everyone feels this way. I have known many scholars who are intimately involved with communities beyond their backyard as well as halfway across the globe (Sangtin Writers and Nagar 2006; Routledge 2003; Gilmore and Gilmore 2003). Such individuals negotiate the physical and social distances between the various parts of their lives, facilitated increasingly by rapidly evolving technology. Indeed, if it were not for such people, the geographic distribution of scholar activists would be more skewed than it is, leaving large swaths of the globe without the benefits and resources, however meager, that committed academics can bring to marginalized communities.

The question of geography may appear to be mundane or irrelevant to your particular situation. That's okay. The point is to encourage you to think about your basic character, your likes and dislikes, and how you want to live your life. As this example illustrates, seemingly irrelevant issues can play a major role in how you develop as a scholar activist. Obviously, there is no right way to decide which communities you will work with and what kind of relationship(s) you will construct. The goal is to find a situation that works for you in which you are able to grow, contribute, and find meaning.

Just as space is important to the development of scholar activists, so too is time. Do you prefer long-term, short-term, or sporadic relationships with activist communities? I have a strong preference for long-term relationships, but there are merits to each, provided the proper context. One of the reasons I tend toward long-term commitments with activist groups is that I have seen numerous academics rush into a community ready to contribute, do their thing, and leave. This is not necessarily bad, as sometimes organizations and movements are in dire need of some quick assistance and such a strategy serves a need,³ but it is not a model I am comfortable with because it pays scant attention to the ongoing needs of the community and issues of reciprocity. In my case, partly because I lack the kind of skills typically associated with critical short-term assistance (see Question 5), and also because of my scholarly interest in social movement activism, I have sought to build long-term relationships with activists who share my political interests and commitments.

You may consider issues of space and time to be fairly abstract, but in reality they provide the foundation for more concrete matters. Identifying such key issues has facilitated my ability to integrate my research, teaching, university service, and political activism. The first three, research, teaching, and service, constitute the pillars of any academic career. Although universities usually view these domains separately, many scholar activists, myself included, manage to weave them together so that they perform “double duty” in terms of university requirements. For example, much of my research and many of my publications have been based on my community “service.” More recently, I have tried to create the same kind of symbiosis pedagogically. Over the last seven years or so, I have designed most of my undergraduate courses so that they are centered on a community-based research project. My motivation was largely pedagogic, as I had come to realize that students are far more apt to remember and be transformed by what they do than by what they hear and read. At the same time, I realized that this was a way to contribute to and strengthen my relationship with local community groups. Fortunately, the university has either supported such activities or, more often, simply not blocked them, even when they were critical of the institution (see, e.g., Houston and Pulido 2002). While this has been my experience, I know that faculty have been disciplined both formally and informally for engaging students in research critical of their employers. In such cases, scholar activists would do well to study their institution in advance in order to assess how it might respond to critical projects. At the very least you can hopefully make an informed decision about how you want to proceed.

In short, by integrating my research, teaching, and political activities as much as possible and keeping them in all one place, I feel that I have been able to sustain myself as a scholar activist and contribute in various ways to causes I am committed to. The specifics of how you choose to be a scholar activist will differ for everyone, but what is important is that you are clear on your particular needs and how that will inform your political and academic life.

Question 3: What kind of scholar activist should I be?

ANSWER: There are many different ways of being a scholar activist, each of which has its own merits and makes a particular contribution. For example, there are public intellectuals along the lines of Howard Zinn (1999), those who see their theoretical work as directly contributing to activism (Riedner and Tritelli 1999), those who engage in advocacy research (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1993), and those who practice “militant ethnography” (Juris 2005). In addition to the type of activism one might choose, there is also the question of site. Will you direct your energies toward transforming the campus, the local community, the country, or the world? To further complicate matters, within each of these categories there is considerable variation. In terms of community activism, for example, some scholar activists may assume positions of leadership (Kobayashi 1994; Meagher 1999), while others may contribute as rank-and-file members. Indeed, an individual may move through these various categories over time, as Alan Wald has shown (Tritelli and Hanscom 1999). What is important is that you are aware of how you wish to be a scholar activist, the reasons for such a decision, and how that choice may change over time. Whether one is drawn to a specific form of activism or simply thrust

into a particular role (a surprising number of people “stumble” into activism; Pulido 2006, ch. 3), it seems to me that one of the key issues is negotiating change. Not only is change often difficult for people, but we need to consciously decide what direction we wish to move rather than just letting life happen to us. In short, how does one evolve as a scholar activist, and how can one facilitate that process? The business of becoming an activist and an individual’s trajectory of activism are the products of both larger political events, what might be called external factors, and one’s personal dynamics, what I refer to as internal factors (Pulido 2003). By understanding both the external and the internal, we can appreciate how individual changes occur at the nexus of both.

External events are larger shifts in the political climate, organizing opportunities/obstacles, and other situational changes that usually are beyond your control. These are developments that you must respond to. I’ll provide an example of one such instance. I recently completed a project on the Third World Left in Los Angeles. This was a comparative study of African American, Asian American, and Chicana/o activists in which I examined the extent to which differential racialization led to distinct forms of radical politics. As part of the investigation, I explored the early politicization of activists, particularly the circumstances that had led to their politicization. Although there were some interesting variations among members of the various racial/ethnic groups, across the board all activists traced their early political involvement to two key events: the antiwar movement and the Black civil rights struggle. These events were so profound and pervasive that they forced individuals to respond to them and take a position. Both are examples of external events—they provide the larger historical backdrop that shapes our lives.

The internal, in contrast, is a vast terrain that includes such things as one’s personality, temperament, moral compass, and stage in the life cycle. These are factors that will greatly influence what activities we decide to pursue at a given time. At one point, for instance, I was deeply involved with a local organization, the Labor/Community Strategy Center. Until then I had largely eschewed campus activism for community engagement (I will admit to not only preferring community activism but also seeing it as more “authentic” than campus work, an admittedly problematic distinction). However, when the worker conflicts on my campus arose, I was soon called upon to get involved, and I felt, given my position as a faculty member, that my participation was essential. I quickly learned, however, that I could not maintain two spheres of political work very well. I felt very scattered and did not feel that I was able to give my best to either struggle. Moreover, it was at a time when I began experiencing some health problems and wanted to simplify and streamline my life somewhat. For these reasons, I decided to focus on the campus labor struggles—a decision very much driven by internal factors. Upon the conclusion of the labor campaigns, the campus itself had changed considerably, and I became increasingly immersed in campus activism. Not only had the campus changed, but I had changed, and I began to see and enjoy the possibilities of campus activism in a new light.

I realize that I have articulated a somewhat artificial distinction between the external and the internal, but I have found this to be a useful device insofar as it illuminates distinct spheres of influence. Of course, the reality is that internal and external are always in dynamic conversation and shape the overall tapestry of one’s life, as can be seen in my decision to concentrate on campus activism. The point, as always, is to pay attention to what is going on both outside and inside as you negotiate changes in your trajectory as a scholar activist.

Question 4: As a scholar activist, how should I approach community work?

ANSWER: Two fundamental issues should guide how scholar activists approach community work: accountability and reciprocity. Both are shorthand for a series of important relations, including how individual scholars view themselves as activists, how they see themselves in relation to other activists, and the kinds of relationships they build. When all is said and done, what kind of scholar activist you are and the amount and

type of work that you produce are secondary to the issues of accountability and reciprocity. In my experience, these are the criteria by which you will be judged and remembered.

Accountability refers to the fact that scholar activists are not lone mavericks. Indeed, the idea of a scholar activist operating alone is something of an oxymoron. The whole point of being a scholar activist is that you are embedded in a web of relationships, some of which demand a high level of accountability to a community or other group of individuals. It is accountability that will hopefully ensure the relevancy of your work in the effort to create social change. Accountability requires seeing yourself as part of a community of struggle, rather than as the academic who occasionally drops in. As longtime activist Lisa Duran, the executive director of Rights for All People (RAP), recently explained, “One of the problems with scholar activists is that they’re just not useful because they are not sufficiently rooted in the community so that they don’t have a sense of where their time should be spent. Being clear on how the effort being put forward is short term, long term, or medium term and its connection to the larger goal is not just an idea—it’s rooted in struggle” (interview, July 2, 2004, Los Angeles).

It has become commonplace to hear activists and community residents complain about academics who act as if they are not accountable to anyone but rather privilege their own work and agenda. This is understandable, as academia is all about the individual: one’s research, teaching, service, promotion, and evaluation all focus on the individual abstracted from a larger social context. In contrast, activism is very much a collective process (or at least effective activism usually is). Thus, if you are serious about becoming a scholar activist, at some point you need to decide how you will reconcile your own personal desires with that of a larger community. And while I see many students and faculty who genuinely want to work with others, being held accountable is another story. I know this to be true because I have been one of those persons (see below).

Closely related to but distinct from accountability is reciprocity. Reciprocity denotes a mutual give and take and is something that scholar activists must always be attentive to. Just as activists and community residents resent academics who are not accountable, so too do they resent those who swoop in, collect what they need from a community, and then move on, having enriched themselves but not necessarily provided anything of substance to the community in question. Academics often rationalize that they are providing an important service simply by telling the story of a subordinated or otherwise marginalized group. While some may buy this (certainly, conventional academic norms encourage such thinking), do not be fooled. Writing about a community’s plight or struggle should not be confused with reciprocity. Consider for a moment what the scholar is getting out of the arrangement. If a student, the scholar is most likely earning a graduate degree. If the scholar has already graduated, then the data collection and analysis will lead to either tenure or a promotion, an enhanced reputation, further academic opportunities, and perhaps some modest level of fame, if not fortune. How does the community benefit? Their story gets told to a particular audience. Though it is certainly true that a subordinated group’s story must be told if the situation is to improve, there is ample evidence that simply telling that story will not lead to any substantive change. In fact, university libraries are filled with accounts of how aggrieved communities, nations, and workers struggled and resisted, but in no way did these stories contribute to a shift in power relations. Activists and residents of well-studied communities, such as northern New Mexico, the Mississippi Delta, Appalachia, and South Central Los Angeles, are quite aware of the unequal power dynamics embedded in research initiatives and of who bears the actual costs. For this reason, many communities are wary of sharing their experiences with new scholars, as experience has taught them to be cautious.

The need for reciprocity does not imply that every scholar activist should engage in participatory or advocacy research. Rather, it means looking for ways to reciprocate. Below I offer some examples of how this may or may not work. In the first case, I draw upon my own experience to illustrate a failure of accountability and reciprocity, and in the second, I share the success of my friend and colleague Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo, who has reciprocated in some innovative ways.

My own story of failing to reciprocate stems from my dissertation fieldwork in northern New Mexico. As stated earlier, the project centered on how working-class Chicano/a communities in California and New Mexico mobilized around environmental issues (Pulido 1996b). The New Mexico case study centered on Ganados del Valle, a community-based organization dedicated to sustainable development. I was deeply sympathetic to and fascinated with the local community and its struggle, but I was also on a mission—to complete my dissertation. Besides thinking that I could not afford to be “sidetracked” by giving of myself in a substantive way, I lacked confidence in my research skills and did not see how they might be helpful. As a result, although I did make some offers of assistance, they were vague and not particularly fruitful. In addition, the fact that I was not rooted in the community and was unwilling to make a long-term commitment to the region (as this would have required traveling) all worked against my forging a respectful and viable relationship with the group. In short, I was simply not willing to make the necessary investment of time and energy, despite my good intentions.

The situation was complicated by identity politics. Although other scholars were also studying Ganados del Valle, I was one of the few Chicanas/os. Our shared heritage added a layer of ethnic confusion to the picture: not only did I sense (correctly) that the white researchers thought I had a different relationship to the community, but also I was uncertain about the meaning of my identity in the research process. Did I have a greater connection because of our ethnicity, despite the significant differences between an urban Chicana and rural New Mexicans? If so, did I also have a greater responsibility? Finally, because I was already a political activist of sorts, I assumed that I would produce politically relevant and useful work. However, I was still under the illusion that simply telling a story was a politically useful act. In short, although I was a political activist in Los Angeles, and although I identified as a scholar activist, the reality was that I was not yet one, as I did not understand fully what being one meant.

Being accountable would have required me to perhaps stay longer and/or make numerous repeat trips to the region; it would have necessitated shifting from my narrow dissertation focus to develop related projects and activities that were of more direct use to the community. Instead, regardless of the reasons, I operated as a scholar—certainly a very sympathetic one—but not a scholar activist. As can be seen, accountability requires flexibility, the ability to give of yourself, and willingness to step outside yourself, regardless of how “oppositional” your research might be. While I am not exactly proud of how I handled myself in this situation, the episode was important insofar as it made me realize that I needed to figure out how to be a scholar activist.

Fortunately, I did figure it out over time. However, for an entirely different reason, I now once again find myself in a situation of not being able to reciprocate and be held accountable. Three years ago I became a mother, and while this has brought me great joy, I have had to scale back my political work. Given the centrality of reciprocity to me, however, this has meant a change in research focus, as I would not feel comfortable writing on community organizing and activism without everyday participation. Not only would this limitation result in inferior scholarship, but such a practice would violate my code of reciprocity, as I lack the time and energy to give back to any communities. Consequently, I am currently pursuing archival and popular education projects (see “A People’s Guide to Los Angeles,” www.pgtla.org). Hopefully, when my children are older, I can return to a life of intense political engagement and writing about my passion, social movements.

In contrast, my friend and colleague Pierrette Hondagneu-Sotelo understood early on what being a scholar activist entailed and how reciprocity worked. For her dissertation, Hondagneu-Sotelo conducted extensive fieldwork among Mexican immigrants in Northern California, exploring how gender relations were transformed through the migration process. On the basis of the data she gathered, she wrote her dissertation, received a PhD, and eventually turned it into an award-winning book (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994). Although Hondagneu-Sotelo benefited immeasurably by tapping into the lives, stories, and experiences of these Mexican immigrants, she also understood the power dynamics at play and was not content to simply take from her subjects. Upon completing her fieldwork she moved to Southern California, where she became involved with a group called

Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, Los Angeles (CHIRLA). Initially, she simply asked CHIRLA how she might be of service—always a good first move. Eventually it was decided that the group would create a series of fotonovelas to be used for popular education purposes among Latino immigrants. Hondagneu-Sotelo's research led specifically to the development of a fotonovela focused on the rights of domestic workers (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1993), which has been widely used. In this case the researcher reciprocated, not directly with the individuals she had investigated, but rather with the same class or group of people. The fact that she had moved to another part of the state did not hinder her commitment and sense of responsibility to the community in question; instead, she found innovative ways to maintain accountability and to reciprocate.

Question 5: I want to be useful to the “community.” What kind of work should I do?

ANSWER: This is a very common question, as it gets to the heart of what most scholar activists desire: to be of service and to change the world. While there are many ways to alter the existing social formation, many hope that their research will be of direct use to those actually engaged in counterhegemonic struggle. In reality, however, the production of such research raises a host of issues concerning how activists operate as researchers. I will begin by discussing the kind of research that social change organizations often need and will then present alternatives one might consider if one lacks the requisite skills outlined.

There is, admittedly, something very compelling about conducting research of direct use to activists. Outside the classroom, there are few venues where academics can really feel that they make a difference and see concrete change result from their work. Seeing one's research put to such productive ends creates a deep sense of satisfaction. Although scholars of all disciplines engage in such research, it is performed most by social scientists—given that field's supposed goals of addressing societal problems. If you harbor such aspirations, I would recommend honing your quantitative, technical, grant-writing, and policy skills. In my experience, this is what many social change organizations need when it comes to research: people who can conduct sophisticated quantitative and/or technical analyses; people who can challenge both policy makers and right-wing think tanks on their own turf; and people who can help organizations grow and/or fund new projects. Quantitative skills are always in demand, as are people who know how to make maps using GIS, digest an Environmental Impact Report (EIR), or decipher a state budget. Such research skills, though often devalued in theoretically driven fields, can make a tremendous difference to a community struggle. For example, several years ago Los Angelesarea researchers employed by Justice for Janitors (Service Employees International Union [SEIU] 399, now 1877) produced a study entitled “A Penny for Justice” (SEIU 1995), which documented the extent to which the public subsidized low-wage janitors via health care costs. Researchers argued that employers, by contributing an additional penny per hour, could provide janitors with health insurance and thus no longer burden the public with such costs. This was a terrific piece of activist scholarship that was debated in city council, resonated with the public, and ultimately helped the janitors secure a better contract (Merrifield 2000).

Unfortunately, I am not one of those scholars. I have a very limited set of quantitative skills, and my passion is really for history and talking to people about their experiences and stories. I have found, however, that such products are of far less use to those communities I am interested in working with. Accordingly, I have had to think through this skills mismatch problem. My research on environmental justice provides a clear example. Environmental justice refers to the disproportionate exposure of people of color and low-income communities to environmental degradation (Bullard 1993). Environmental justice emerged as a topic while I was a graduate student; thus, not surprisingly, I became involved with the movement. Activists welcomed me as an academic, but it was quickly apparent that I did not have the skills that they really needed. Certainly they needed researchers who could tell the stories of struggling communities to a larger audience and who could challenge the hegemonic nature of Western science, as well as attend rallies and lick envelopes—all of which I was happy to do. But what they really needed was someone who could identify various sources of pollution, map them, and conduct a rigorous demographic analysis of the data. This I could not do. To be honest, I could have retooled

and learned these skills, but ultimately I was not willing to do so. I was not willing to put the movement's immediate needs ahead of my own because I knew I would have been miserable. I was much more interested in documenting the history of community struggle and exploring how the racial formation affected organizing efforts, as well as how discourses of race were operationalized within environmental justice politics and research (Pulido 2000, 1998, 1996a). While these topics were certainly of interest to the larger movement, they were not considered urgent or of immediate use.

I handled the problem in two ways. First, I did my best to connect the organizations in question with people who had the requisite skills. Although I lacked the specific research skills, I knew and had access to people who did. Sometimes this meant coaxing colleagues to help out, encouraging graduate students to get involved, or, in some cases, conducting preliminary assessments myself. Though this was a relatively small effort on my part, it was deeply appreciated by community residents and activists. As academics we often take for granted the resources available to us, resources that may be difficult for poor and working-class constituencies to access.

The second thing I did was to consciously contribute in other ways. While some scholar activists prefer to function primarily as researchers, I tried to be a reliable supporter/member who could provide whatever assistance was needed. Sometimes this required setting up tables and making phone calls, while at others it meant utilizing my legitimacy as a university professor to provide testimony, for example, at public hearings. Although I couldn't conduct specific forms of analysis, I could produce and contribute to a number of other projects that were useful to the overall struggle, including helping to write/edit newsletters, giving lectures on relevant topics, organizing class research projects that generated basic data, and developing popular education materials.

Despite being generally happy to contribute either as a researcher or as a general member, I am somewhat critical of the way that I have handled the situation. While I reject the model of the academic "expert," in retrospect I could have leveraged more of my "social capital" to greater effect. One reason I hesitated to do so was my discomfort with the distance between myself and the community in question. Feminist scholars have problematized the space between researchers and subjects (Behar 1993; Gilbert 1994; England 1994), arguing that this distance, regardless of how uncomfortable, must be acknowledged, as it is the result of uneven power relations. While I know this intellectually, I have had a harder time incorporating the knowledge into my attitudes and behavior. This is partly because I come from a working-class family: My parents are "those people" who don't understand EIRs and budgets and policy analyses. As a result, for a long time I did not wish to set myself apart from them and was uncomfortable with the status conferred by the PhD and my professorial position. This, coupled with my disdain for those who related to working-class communities only as the academic expert, led me to bend over backwards not to be like them, but at a price. Had I been more comfortable with my "in-betweenness," I might have been able to do a better job of contributing more fully to the communities and struggles that I was committed to (see also Question 3).

Question 6: What kinds of ethical problems might I confront as a scholar activist?

ANSWER: Scholar activists will inevitably encounter a range of ethical dilemmas. This can catch them by surprise, as they sometimes have romantic visions of the "beloved community." Among progressives there is a deeply entrenched narrative that confers a nebulous moral authority upon nonelites (Joseph 2002). While such beliefs are entirely understandable given hegemonic values, subordinated communities can also be sites of unethical conduct and/or political disagreement (Nagar 2000). Contradictions may become more apparent and potentially problematic the closer one is to a community. Scholar activists often seek closeness, as it facilitates access to events, materials, and members of the community (which may contribute to scholarship) and produces a sense of political efficacy (which feeds the activist). As you become more integrated into a group, however, the boundaries between the scholar and activist may become muddied, and responding to conflicting demands

increasingly difficult. Such conflicts may be fraught with ethical challenges, including conflicts of interest, questions of representation, and questions of one's commitment to the community (versus the university, discipline, etc.). While at first glance these may appear to be political issues, I frame them as ethical ones. I do so because progressive scholars and activists routinely overlook the ethical dimensions of political activism. If we define ethics as the exploration of how we should best live our lives, it will become apparent that ethical commitments underlie most political positions. If we wish to fully understand the dynamics informing our political work—which I believe is essential—then we must consider the role of ethics. The world of the scholar activist is filled with ethical dilemmas, and although I only discuss two examples, I hope that this brief discussion will encourage you to be cognizant of the many ethical issues in your life.

My first example centers on a political disagreement I had with a labor union in which my actions did not reflect my beliefs. In short, I was not truthful to myself. It is important to understand that ethics does not refer solely to how we treat others; it also encompasses how we act in relation to ourselves. As previously mentioned, I developed relationships with union locals who were considered quite progressive and at the forefront of “social movement unionism.” Social movement unionism is a form of unionism in which labor unions are politically relevant to working-class people and address a range of important issues, not just narrow bread-and-butter concerns (Scipes 1992). The goal of social movement unionism is for labor to actually become a vibrant social movement, rather than merely being defined as a “special interest” group (Milkman 2000; Bernstein 2004; Merrifield 2000). The political goals and energy of the locals led me to participate in numerous campaigns, not just ones related to USC. Workers and organizers alike could count on me to attend events, provide needed contacts, participate in mass civil disobedience, or whatever was required. For the most part, I felt good about my participation: I learned a great deal and felt confident that I was assisting workers who were struggling not only for a decent livelihood but also for a better union movement.

While there were certainly small things that I disagreed with, there was significant political agreement between me and one local until the issue of Indian gaming arose. Over the past decade, California, like many other states, has allowed Indian tribes to operate gambling operations on sovereign land (Morain 2004). This has become a highly profitable enterprise. Given the money involved, as well as the fact that a protected minority is at the center of the debate, there has been an explosion of legislation surrounding the issue. When the matter first came before the California electorate in 1998, the union actively opposed Proposition 5. It argued, along with environmentalists and others, that the proposed law would authorize unregulated gambling in the state, something that organized labor, understandably, challenged on a number of grounds.

In California, Latinas/os constitute a significant portion of the Indian gaming workforce, and serious questions have been raised regarding wages, working conditions, and unionization. By opposing Proposition 5, which legalized the expansion of Indian gaming, a progressive labor union, was, in effect, pitted against Indian tribes. Regardless of the pros and cons of Indian gaming, I disagreed with how the union advocated its position. Although Indian gaming is not without its problems, I felt that native peoples should be allowed sovereignty to the extent possible. Moreover, given the genocide, displacement, and poverty they have suffered and continue to endure, I hesitate to categorize indigenous people as just another special-interest group, as I believed the union was doing. I agreed that questions of workers’ rights and wages needed to be addressed, but through political negotiation. Given that two marginalized groups were at the heart of the conflict, I hoped that both parties would be committed to working out an acceptable solution.

Instead, the union waged an all-out war against Proposition 5, assuming that once I was “educated” on the matter I would get on board, as I had with other issues. The local invited me to speak at events, distribute pamphlets, and get other people involved in the cause. I could not do so, however, because my heart was not in it. Perhaps I was somewhat naive in my hope that the matter could be resolved outside the legislative arena, but what is important is that I disagreed with the union’s approach and lacked the courage to say so. I did

occasionally try to complicate the situation, question the union's strategy, and point out various contradictions, but I did not systematically explain my position and why I could not actively participate in this campaign. This was a low point for me in my experience as a scholar activist: I felt great pressure from the union but could not speak my truth. In retrospect, I believe that most union members would have accepted my decision and respected it as simply a political disagreement, but I was too afraid to test the waters, too afraid of somehow having my commitment questioned. Given where I am at today, I am confident that I would handle the situation differently, as I have a greater ability to stand by my convictions. But I also understand that this particular event helped me reach that point. Ethical dilemmas and political disagreements, however difficult, are valuable opportunities that allow us to clarify our beliefs and how we wish to act upon them, which is all part of the process of political development.

The second ethical conflict I wish to address involves representations of scholarly work, particularly differing interpretations and narrations of activism and activists and how they are represented in texts. Although volumes have been written on the question of representation from various perspectives, my intent is to discuss how I have experienced this problem as a scholar activist. Although I present one instance, I have encountered this problem in every major research project in which I have used a large interview set. Moreover, numerous other scholar activists have discussed this problem with me, suggesting that it is a common problem for those engaged in ethnographic and qualitative fieldwork.

As previously mentioned, I recently completed *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles* (Pulido 2006). The project was essentially based on archival sources as well as many interviews with African American, Asian American, and Chicana/o activists. Since I sought to interview people outside my own racial/ethnic group and with whom I did not necessarily have a history, my reputation, or the willingness of others to vouch for me as a reliable academic, was key in getting those I did not know to talk with me. Many former activists were hesitant to discuss this part of their lives. Not only did they feel betrayed by previous academics whom they felt had misrepresented them, but they also had fears of state surveillance. Because of these concerns, my activist "credentials" were crucial in enabling me to secure interviews and also offered some hope to activists that their stories would be appropriately told. Needless to say, I took this confidence seriously and did my utmost to convey the stories I gathered with respect and accuracy, not only because they are the memories and experiences of real people, but also because I cared deeply about these movements and struggles and wished to portray them in all their richness and complexity.

To do so, I needed to develop a process for working with my interviewees. This was relatively easy, since feminist scholars have pioneered various collaborative research models, which, in turn, have been embraced by an array of critical scholars. For example, researchers such as Diane Fujino (2005), Mario García (1994), Maurice Isserman (see Healey and Isserman 1993), and Richa Nagar (see Sangtin Writers and Nagar 2006) have pursued relatively collaborative, nonhierarchical models of knowledge production in which the subject and researcher work together on the project at every step. Most scholars, however, employ a modified approach in which the subjects are consulted, invited to review drafts, and asked to comment but are not necessarily engaged in every decision.

In my case, I conducted the interviews, transcribed them, and sent them to the interviewees for comments. Although few actually commented, this strategy generated some valuable feedback and, perhaps more importantly, provided interview subjects with a transcript, which many found useful. Upon completing a draft of the manuscript, I sent copies to most of the interviewees for comments and incorporated a number of their suggestions. Certainly these exchanges lengthened the process, but these are common practices among those seeking to address the power imbalance inherent in contemporary social science research.

During the course of Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left, I did a series of interviews with Asian American activists and wrote an account of one Japanese American organization. This was a difficult history to reconstruct, as there were few written records; I had to piece together a narrative based largely on individuals' memories. Not only are memories notoriously faulty, but more importantly, they reflect distinct experiences—which differed radically in this case. As usual, I sent the manuscript to all the interviewees; this led to a collective conversation among them and prompted another former activist to ask to be interviewed late in the process. I happily obliged, thinking the new material might add greater accuracy to the text. And in fact the informant was extremely helpful in identifying shortcomings and helping to clarify the organizational account. However, she differed radically from the other members in her analysis of the group's gender relations. While most interviewees described the organization as patriarchal and sexist, she insisted that it was not. When confronted with the evidence that other interviewees had presented, she often dismissed the other female informants as being "weak" on gender issues or simply not recalling things accurately. She continued to communicate with me over several months through e-mails explaining her perspective on the organization. Typically, these e-mails were also sent to the other interviewees, a correspondence that allowed me to glimpse not only the differing interpretations of gender relations but also how members interacted with each other. The reality was that the activists were continuing to play out the dynamics of an earlier period, including issues that had not yet been resolved. Unfortunately, being part of this process was extremely time consuming and emotionally draining, as I was under intense pressure from the various parties to portray their experience and interpretations as the organizational experience. I felt as if I had walked into a quagmire of difficult personalities and unresolved issues to which there was no easy answer or exit. After several months of intense interactions, and after I had taken firm positions with the various parties, I invoked the press deadline as one way of concluding the dialogue. Ultimately, I decided to depict the organization as patriarchal (though far less so than its Chicana/o and African American counterparts), but with clear acknowledgment that not all parties agreed on this interpretation. Although this experience is hardly uncommon, it was nevertheless difficult and raised several ethical concerns: To what extent should one accommodate the needs and desires of one's research subjects? What are the political and ethical implications of privileging particular narratives? Where does my responsibility to the informant end and my role as researcher take precedence? Certainly the answers to these questions will depend on both the individual and the circumstance. Indeed, it is not my intent to offer any ready solutions. Rather, I wish to illustrate the kinds of ethical challenges I face in the course of my research—issues that you might very well confront yourself.

Upon the conclusion of such research I am usually so drained that I often follow a major ethnographic project with an archival or theoretical study requiring minimal emotional energy. Such work, I find, restores me, and inevitably whets my appetite to go back into the field again.

I have tried to address the most frequently asked questions, as well as those that seem pertinent for anyone considering becoming a scholar activist. Although I have tried to cover a sizable terrain in this letter, I would like to highlight some key themes and lessons. The first is simply recognizing that being a scholar activist is not always easy but is immensely rewarding. You will inevitably find yourself having to make difficult professional, ethical, and political choices and having to live with the consequences. This is never easy, but it is part and parcel of a rich life. Second, it is of the utmost importance that scholar activists pay attention to the rules and requirements of academia. It is imperative that you be fully aware of what is expected of you and that you make fully informed choices. You may decide that some institutional requirements are worth challenging, or you may decide to comply and direct your energies toward other goals. What is important is that you make the decision and that it is not made for you, or worse, that you were unaware of the expectations. There is certainly nothing wrong with deciding to leave academia (as a number of brave souls have done), but it is far preferable to leave on your terms.

A third lesson, which applies to all spheres of life, is the importance of living a life of reflection. Because becoming a scholar activist entails making difficult choices and acts of courage—particularly the determination to live your truth—it is essential that you be attentive to your emotions and thoughts and consider how they affect your attitudes, values, and behavior. Clarity in your actions will spare you a great deal of grief and allow you to be more open and direct with colleagues and comrades. Finally, as suggested above, the life of the scholar activist is not for the fainthearted, weak, or nominally committed. The truth is that it takes fortitude and wisdom to live such a life. Fortitude is required to make unpopular decisions, to challenge both the powerful and the disenfranchised; and wisdom is necessary to ensure that you have weighed your options, understand the consequences, and are creating a life that you can be proud of. Living the life of the scholar activist not only helps to change the world but also provides an avenue to change yourself.

In Solidarity,

Laura Pulido

Now Think Critically

Chapter 5: *Recognizing Our Privilege*

1. Did you encounter any problems reading these pieces? We will share this during discussion to clarify parts that were difficult to understand.
 2. What are some problems that Pulido recognizes when speaking about academics entering communities that are not theirs?
 3. What is Pulido's idea of reciprocity and her take on storytelling?
 4. Got anything else on your mind? Write it down here.

Index



Seattle Declares State Of Emergency On Homeless Crisis

The city's massive growth is hindering its goal of ending homelessness.

Lydia O'Connor General Assignment Reporter



A Seattle homeless man reassembles his tent after it collapsed into a 2012 rainstorm.

Seattle Mayor Ed Murray and King County Executive Dow Constantine this week declared states of emergency for their homeless crises, pledging millions to better serve residents living on the streets.

Seattle on Monday outlined a [\\$5.3 million plan](#) to address the crisis, while King County proposed an additional \$2 million.

The emergency declarations come months after Seattle failed to meet its goal of [ending chronic homelessness in 10 years](#). That shortcoming is likely partly due to Seattle's massive growth -- it was the fastest-growing U.S. city last year -- driving up housing prices and displacing lower-income residents.

The annual "One Night Count" on Jan. 23 in Seattle's King County identified 3,772 individuals living on the streets -- a 21 percent jump from the previous year's count -- with more than 2,800 of them in Seattle. The combined number of homeless people living on King County streets, shelters and transitional housing rose from **9,294 in 2014** to **10,047 this year**, according to the count, organized by the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness.

The emergency funding will add to Seattle's annual spending of more than \$40 million and King County's \$36 million to help people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Murray said the local governments need more outside funding.

"The City is prepared to do more as the number of people in crisis continues to rise, but our **federal and state partners must also do more**," Murray said in a statement. "Cities cannot do this alone. Addressing homelessness must be a national priority with a federal response."

About half of Seattle's \$5.3 million will be designated as flexible funds to "**quickly move people through the emergency shelter system into stable housing**," establish more support and case management for homeless youth, improve data collection on homelessness and manage public health and waste at homeless encampments.

The homelessness organization All Home King County applauded the city and county leaders' emergency declarations.

"Their commitments of local resources are action steps toward our strategies for addressing the **immediate crisis of homelessness**, and making it brief and only a one-time occurrence," All Home King County said in a statement.

Portland, Oregon, Los Angeles and the state of Hawaii all declared homeless states of emergency earlier this year.

To Read More on Huffpost Impact: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/seattle-homeless-emergency_56392c7fe4b0411d306eb2eb

Factors that Correlate to Why a Youth is Experiencing Homelessness

Note: Please know that this is a hand created chart that is meant to be a brief overview, not an in depth examination. There are many more factors than those listed here that correlate to why a youth can be experiencing homelessness, and even within these factors there are thousands more stories for why a youth can be on the streets. These statistics are also very rough, all from different sources. That being said, read on.

Factor	% of Homeless Youth Population	% of American Youth Population	Common Reasons for Why It's a Correlational Factor
<i>Being a Youth of Color</i>	65%	38%	People of color are victimized by institutionalized racism because of their racial appearance, meaning they are more likely to experience homelessness and have a harder time removing themselves from it than white youth.
<i>Identifying as LGBTQ</i>	40%	5%	When many LGBTQ individuals come out to their families, their parental units are unable to accept their child's identity and cut them off financially, forcing them to take to the streets.
<i>Having a Mental Health Disorder</i>	30%	20%	Youth with mental disabilities are sometimes too much to handle financially/ emotionally, causing parental units to no longer be able to support them, forcing them onto the streets with nowhere else to go.

<i>Having a Physical Disability</i>	13%	8%	Similar to mental disabilities, sometimes parental units find a youth with a physical disability too much to handle financially/emotionally, causing them to leave their household and live without a regular shelter.
<i>Living With a Chronic Disease (Stats are HIV)</i>	17%	7%	Many illnesses exist that are too expensive for youth and their families to afford to pay for, such as HIV and AIDS. This can cause youth to take to the streets when they lose all of their money to treatments.
<i>Being Undocumented</i>	(unavailable)	3%	Being undocumented means that a youth has limited access to resources, such as the ability to attend many public colleges, being unable to get a work license to hold down jobs, not being able to access public facilities given their lack of ability to prove their citizenship, etc. Limited access means they can't easily support themselves without the help of others.
<i>Living or Lived in Poverty</i>	62%	22%	When a youth lives in a household without a stable financial income, often times homelessness is caused by parents not being able to support the youth anymore and forcing them to leave and live without stable shelter.

<i>Living with an Addiction (Either their own or their parents')</i>	35%	15%	Parental units will often forcibly remove a youth from their household if they have a serious substance abuse problem. Alternatively, if a parental unit has a substance abuse problem that can cause the youth to live in an unsafe environment and force them to run away, leading to homelessness.
<i>Experiencing Physical/Sexual Abuse as a Child in Household</i>	30%	9%	When a youth lives in an unsafe environment in which they face abuse on a regular basis they may choose to liberate themselves of the abuse by running away, often leading to a lack of a regular shelter and eventually homelessness.
<i>Experiencing Verbal Abuse as a Child in Household</i>	50%	7%	liberate themselves of the abuse by running away, often leading to a lack of a regular shelter and eventually homelessness.
<i>Having Lived in Institutionalized Child Care (Foster Care, Group Home, etc.)</i>	27%	.5%	Most commonly, when a youth goes through an institutionalized child care system they age out when they turn 18 and are then considered independent. Often youth are unsure of how to support themselves and fall into homelessness without anyone to lean on.

Resources:

- <http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/publications/publications-a-z/425-the-impact-of-homophobia-and-racism-on-glbtq-youth-of-color>
- <http://www.apa.org/topics/immigration/undocumented-video.aspx>
- <https://www.stcloudstate.edu/reslife/staff/documents/HomelessnessStatistics.pdf>
- <http://www.americanhumane.org/children/stop-child-abuse/fact-sheets/child-abuse-and-neglect-statistics.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>