

Diana Kodumal

Professor: Elaine Lux

ENG101: College writing 1

Date 12/05/2020

Homelessness In America and its Effects on Children and there Education

It is estimated that more than 1.5 million children go homeless every year, with no place to call home, living in extreme poverty and dire conditions, these children go through unimaginable mental and physical stress. Despite an outrage and numerous studies being conducted on the issue the government policies for the homeless concentrates mostly on individual homelessness than a family, let alone having special provision for children. IT takes these children years to get back to normalcy and has a long-term effect on their lives. Before getting into the matter more deeply let us try and understand what homelessness is its history, definition, causes, and numbers. Jim Baumohl's book *Homelessness in America* has done a great job explaining just that.

According to Jim Baumohl's book *Homelessness in America*, the word homeless is quite a modern term which came into existence only 150 years ago, the term means not having a permanent home, can broadly be described as living in makeshifts, temporary homes, or police station lodgings of early generation or emergency shelters of the present day or just living outside(chapter 1, pg.3). At the beginning of the nineteenth century with the rise in industrialization and urbanization Americans also started understanding Homelessness. The

explosion of migrants, rapid population growth, rise in the waged employment contributed to the declining living conditions of the people.

In the book *Ending child homelessness in America* Ellen L. Bassuk mentioned that although during the great depression a significant number of families have been homeless.

In the 1980s homelessness among families was less than 1 percent, this number dramatically increased during the 2008 recession to 32% According to the U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development report of 2009, this number includes the 1.5 million children that go homeless every year (pg.496). That is one in every 50 children.

This year the number of the homeless population has seen a significant increase since the last recession due to the covid crisis, According to a new federal study 553,742 people have gone homeless on a single night this year, a 0.7% increase over last year (source world wide web).

The factors that contribute to family homelessness are the birth of a new baby, one of the parents in the family being hospitalized, and single mothers. These people are the most vulnerable groups of society, Other factors include lack of affordable housing and extreme poverty. Ellen L.Bassuk mentions in her book that from 2001 to 2008 the affordable rental housing stocks decreased by 6.3%, And Americans devote more than 50% of their income to housing far more than the 30% considered reasonable(pg.497).

According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, more than 51% of children living in shelters are less than 6 years old and are disproportionately African American and Native American. Constant moving from one shelter to another sometimes even 3-4 times a year, living in over-crowded housing arrangements deeply affects the child's mental

condition and physical development. This frequent moving also means changing schools frequently or even dropping out of schools. These conditions also affect the child's school performance, repeating grades, and lower rates of high school graduates. These kids also live in a very unsafe environment which leads them to extreme stress and exposure to violence. According to The National Center on Family Homelessness more than one-third of these children have been involved in violence and have been investigated by child protection agencies and one-fourth end up being removed from their families(pg. 498).

According to a recent article *A Wake-Up call on student Homelessness* by John King and John Bridgeland in the Education week. The students who go homeless remain hidden in plain sight fearing stigma, these students fail to get the support they desperately need for them to have a stable life and a path out of poverty and homelessness.

For the first time in 2019 under the Every Student Succeeds Act, states released data—as part of a new annual update requirement on high school dropouts—including information on graduation rates for students who have experienced homelessness. Twenty states have graduation rates below 70 percent and nine of them graduate fewer than 6 in 10 homeless students. A National Center for Homeless Education analysis found that the national average graduation rate for homeless students was just 64 percent, compared with nearly 78 percent for low-income students, and more than 84 percent for students overall.

It is clear that Homeless students have the lowest graduation rates and yet nothing much is being done about it. There is no doubt that this issue is a challenge for the policymakers but this has been a long going issue, that seems like the lawmakers have very little interest in solving the problem. This includes lack of training to public school teachers to identify homeless

children and learn to talk about it to the student or the student's parents, lack of funding to schools, shortage of staff, and proper maintenance of records.

Whether one likes it or not homelessness impacts us all and is also a public health problem, it also puts a lot of pressure on the economy of a state, with high consumers of public resources and fewer people who are income generators, studies also show that they affect the tourism of the state. But more importantly, it's a human tragedy. When we think about homelessness we mostly think about addiction, mental illness, domestic violence, job loss, and disability which is true to an extent but it is mainly the lack of a proper support system from family, friends, community, and even the government. With proper help and support, any person going through a crisis can be helped.

People also seem to consider Homeless people to be violent but students have repeatedly shown that homeless people are the once most vulnerable to violence on the streets, people also seem to think that homeless people need to work hard and build there way back to the community, what people fail to realize is, the lack of inequality of opportunities that one has, a homeless man may not have the same opportunity as you and me, and it is our job as a community to provide them an opportunity, Another misconception about homeless people seems to be that they choose to be homeless, no one in their right mind would choose to be homeless, it is usually substance abuse or mental illness that makes people live in those conditions, these people need counseling and the right treatment for them to get there lives back and pave there way back to the society. Lastly, for the better future of the country and its development, we need to concentrate mostly on the children's steps that need to be taken to improve the living stands and lives of homeless children. Good education needs to be provided and dropout rates need to be improved only then can this problem be solved.

Work cited

Bassuk L.Ellen. "Ending Child Homelessness in America." American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, vol.80, no, 4. 2010, pg. 496-504.

Baumohl Jim. *Homelessness in America*. Oryx Press, 1996.

Bridgeland John & King John. "A Wake-up Call on Student Homelessness." Education week, Editorial projects in Education, 27 Aug 2019,

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2019/08/28/a-national-challenge-how-we-can-change.html>