Exploring the Influences of Homelessness on the Single-Parent Family: A Grounded Theory Approach

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Dr. Brenda Hosley, Ph.D. R.N.
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Today’s Objectives

- Identify and discuss the multifaceted influences of homelessness on the processes of family life from the perspective of the single parent.

- Discuss the complexity of homelessness discovered from formulated concepts presented in a logical and explanatory theory.
The Magnitude of Homelessness

- 39.8 million impoverished people
- Poverty threshold for a family of four = $22,350
  (U.S. Census Bureau. 2010, September).

“Being poor can mean that one is an illness, an accident, or a paycheck away from homelessness” (Maurer & Smith, 2005, p.)
Homelessness . . . An Ambiguous Definition?

- Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistant Act 1987:
  A person lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence that has a primary residence temporarily in (a) public shelter; (b) institution; and/or (c) public or private place not designed for sleeping
  (National Coalition for the Homeless 2005, p. 1)

- Having spent more than seven consecutive nights in a shelter or other non-dwelling
  (Swigart & Kolb, 2004, p. 162)

- Doubled and tripled up
  (Homeless in America, 1996)
Changing Faces of the Homeless
Research Question

For the single parent, how has homelessness influenced the life processes of the family?
Synthesizing Frameworks

- Family Systems Theory
- Symbolic Interactionism Theory
- Family Development Theory
Demographics

- Purposive Sample
  - 16 Single-parents
    - 13 Female
    - 2 Male
    - 1 Withdrew
  - Age: 21-55 yrs.
  - Race and Ethnicity:
    - 40% Caucasian
    - 26.6% Black American
    - 13.3% Biracial
    - 13.3% American Indian
    - 13.3% Hispanic

- Education
  - 4 Some High School
  - 7 High School Grad
  - 3 Some College
  - 1 Unknown

- History of Homelessness
  - 60% First time
  - 13.3% Temporary
  - 33.3% Episodic
  - 20.0% Doubled Up
  - Number of moves per year
    - Range 1-8 times
Demographics

- Children
  - 52 children between 15 single parents
  - 57% of children living with parent
  - 42% not living with parent
  - 26% living on own
  - 0.09% adopted
  - 0.02% Incarcerated
Data Collection & Analysis

March 2010 through July 2010

- Semi-structured Interviews
- Observations & Memos
- Open & Axial Coding
- Constant Comparative
- Emergent Themes

Emergent Themes

- Action, Reaction, and Interaction
  - Wake-up Calls
- Paradox of Influences
- Parental Dichotomy
- Self-awareness
- Resourcefulness
Interactive Theory of Single-Parent Homelessness
Conclusions

- Challenges for nurses to create nursing practice for the homeless family in light of diverse family forms, and diverse settings
- Influence of homelessness has implications for lifelong effects on the functionality of the single-parent family
- Social policy development is critical to deter the long-term effects of homelessness
Questions

Harvest Time in Nebraska
References


