

Beyond Social Change: The Clinical Benefits of Advocacy and Social Action

Mark Schumann
Tony Simmons
Liz Coleclough
Matt Spear
Vanessa Borotz
Adam Schneider

Learning Objectives

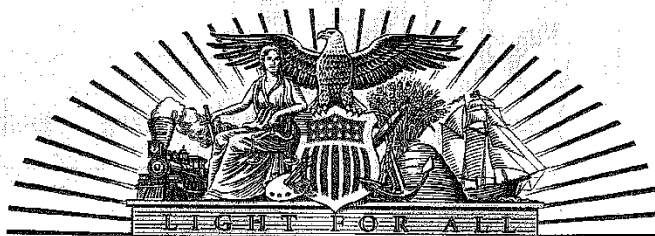
Following the workshop, participants will

- Be able to describe the basic elements of advocacy and social action;
- Be able to describe some examples of advocacy and social action;
- Understand and be able to articulate the positive clinical benefits of participation in advocacy and social action; and
- Have ideas of ways to incorporate advocacy and social action within the scope of activities at their project.

After numerous incidents of being told that they must move on, a group of people who were experiencing homelessness decided to organize and ...

Move On Homelessness

THE

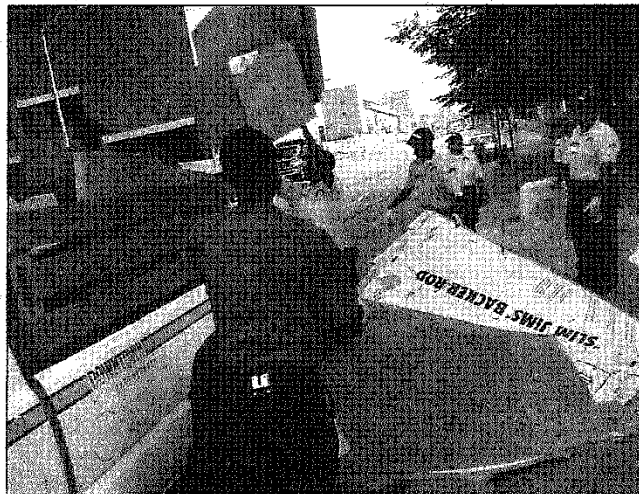


SUN

Homeless booted from city site

Downtown Partnership draws anger after confiscating boxes, belongings near JFX

BY NICOLE FULLER
(SUN REPORTER)



Members of Downtown Partnership, a nonprofit group supported by downtown property owners, gather cardboard boxes and other belongings left by those who had taken shelter on Guilford Avenue near the expressway.

KARL MERTON FERRON (SUN PHOTOGRAPHER)

Rowan Schuyler, who has lived on the streets of Baltimore for the past two months, awoke yesterday to a group of workers from the Downtown Partnership who demanded that she and other homeless people remove themselves and their belongings.

"They were yelling and screaming, 'Wake up! Clapping and whistling,'" said Schuyler, 37, who is originally from Missouri and has joined others encamped along Guilford Avenue near downtown. "They said, 'Move your stuff or we'll throw it away.'"

By the time the encounter was over, workers from the Downtown Partnership had confiscated dozens of boxes that the homeless people used to sleep on, as well as empty food containers, from a grassy patch of land shaded by trees near the Jones Falls Expressway.

That sent advocates for the homeless and legal groups reeling, calling the action "troubling" and "inappropriate." And they demanded answers from the partnership, a nonprofit group supported by downtown property owners to clean and patrol a 106-square-block area of the city.

"I don't know under what authority the Downtown Partnership claims to be able to order people to move," said David Rocah, a staff attorney at the ACLU of Maryland. "The Downtown Partnership in [Please see HOMELESS, 8A]

 **ONLINE** Watch a video at baltimoresun.com/homeless

Goals

Build a campaign to ensure recognition of both

- **Civil rights**
 - Prohibit all public “sweeps”
 - Stop arrests and citations directly related to homelessness
- **Human rights**
 - Establish effective citywide outreach
 - Establish sufficient emergency shelter capacity
 - Create and implement an affordable housing plan

Ever been moved along by the police or Downtown Partnership?

Ever been arrested for not having ID?

Ever have your belongs thrown away?

Ever have trouble finding housing?

Join us Fridays from 3:00pm-4:00pm

Veterans' Park as we

Move On Homelessness

Join homeless people working together to

Build a Movement

to

End Homelessness

Share your experiences

Fridays 3:00pm-4:00pm

Veterans' Park

("The Horseshoe" behind the War Memorial Building)

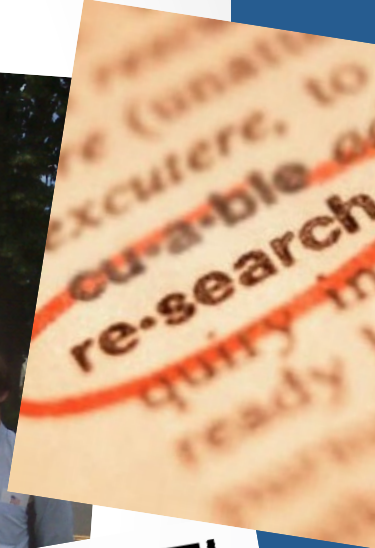
B'More Housing for All

Grassroots **campaign of people who have experienced homelessness** and their allies **working to end homelessness** by:

- **Promoting public policies** to make housing affordable, incomes livable, and health care available for all;
- **Raising community awareness** of the experiences and causes of homelessness; and
- **Fostering leadership and solidarity** among people experiencing homelessness in Baltimore.

Organizing meetings held weekly at Health Care for the Homeless – and provided staff support.

B'More Advocacy & Action



THE SUN // MARYLAND
HOMELESS
Homeless protest at city agency



**The Worst of Both Worlds:
Mental Illness & Homelessness**

October 2nd, 2012,
Goucher College, 9:30 AM

SLEEP OUT

- * To commemorate National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week (Nov. 11-17 2007)
- * To encourage policymakers to develop sustainable solutions to homelessness in accordance with the city's Ten Year Plan
- * To raise awareness about homelessness and the lack of affordable housing in the city
- * In solidarity with those who will spend the winter months without adequate shelter

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 14 2007, MEET AT 7PM
CITY HALL, 100 N. HOLIDAY ST.

RESIDENT COUNCIL

Beyond Social Change

- Some Goals of Therapy

- To **be heard** by and **feel connected** to someone else
- Identify thoughts, emotions and behaviors – and **recognize impact** on oneself and others
- Identify personal **values and goals**
- Increase sense of **self-efficacy** and personal power
- Recognize and accept one's own limits; engage in **self-care**
- Increase **respect and regard** for oneself and others
- Establish boundaries and **healthy relationships**
- Learn to **resolve conflict** constructively

Beyond Social Change

- Some Theoretical Underpinnings of Social Action

- Raised, empowered and liberated consciousness
- Confrontation of oppression and alienation
- Awareness of interconnectedness
- Fostering community and solidarity
- Finding meaning and purpose
- Building efficacy and empowerment
- Recognition and respect of humanity

Psychotherapy

- Private Introspection “The Talking Cure”

- Occurs in private, closed, intimate setting
- Emphasis on confidentiality – and creating a “safe” space for disclosure
- Therapist closely attuned to client’s internal state
- Relationship is nonreciprocal
- Focus on deficits
- “An intentional interpersonal relationship used by trained psychotherapists to aid a client or patient in the problems of living”

Advocacy

- Public Action

“The Doing Cure”

- Allows opportunities to give back – with a focus attention and feel concern for others
- Offers purposeful and meaningful work
- Builds personal power
- Created connections with others, a sense of membership and solidarity
- Provides opportunities to learn to tolerate and resolve conflict
- Recognizes and taps individual strengths
- Challenges recognition of one’s limits – and the importance of self care
- Pursues goal of well-being through enhanced functioning and by confronting oppression

Baltimore-based Qualitative Study:

Exploring the impact of
advocacy engagement
on people with
experience in
homelessness.

Liz Coleclough, MPH

Matt Spear, MPH

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg
School of Public Health

Background

- Who are we?
- What was the purpose of this study?
- What is qualitative research?

Methods

- Study Participants
 - Members of the advocacy groups affiliated with Baltimore Healthcare for the Homeless.
- Data Collection (Winter / Spring 2012)
 - 17 In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)
 - 11 initial IDIs
 - 6 follow-up IDIs
 - 2 Focus Groups (FGs): 4 participants each
 - Note: 4 participants in the FGs also participated in IDIs
- Data Transcription and Analysis
 - Study facilitators digitally recorded all sessions, and transcribed the audio into word documents.
 - Researchers analyzed the transcripts, drawing out the major themes and patterns in the data.

Results

- Two Umbrella Themes
 - Experience of Homelessness
 - Benefits of Advocacy

Experience of Homelessness

Major Theme: Dehumanization

- Feeling Ignored and Rejected
 - “One of the worst parts of being homeless is the dehumanization, the fact that you were invisible. People would go out of their way to make sure they didn’t look at you, they would walk around.”
- Lower Standards of Respect
 - “I had to go to the hospital [...] and they made me sit outside for 3 hours after I got back and it is cold and there is snow on my back and I couldn’t feel it and I was very uncomfortable and I had to ride it and that it is why I joined B’more Housing.”

Experience of Homelessness

Major Theme: Failure of the System

- Limited Information on Accessing Services
 - "I didn't really get a lot of direction from professional people. Like really as how to, like at Codeblue, they said they have resources for people to, you know, get out of the shelter. And stuff. But I didn't really see how any of their resources really worked. Or were that readily available to people."
- Under-available / Unavailable Services
 - "I know that shelters for children are very far and few between. [...] there is no shelter in Baltimore that will take a complete homeless family. Husband, wife, and child. That I'm aware of. None. So often, the families are split up. And, there are very few shelters that take couples. So, even if you get in, the husband and wife, you know, you don't stay together the whole time. You're on one floor. He's on another floor."

Experience of Homelessness

Major Theme: Failure of the System

- Waiting
 - “There was a woman who actually had been waiting for fourteen years. She got the letter that she was approved and died a week later. I personally know people. My legal husband, hopefully soon to be ex husband, was on the list for seven years. He just got a place a few month ago. I mean, there’s a lot of waiting. I mean, basically when you’re homeless, you’re waiting for everything. You’re waiting for, you have to wait, you know, unless you choose to eat out of dumpsters or whatever, you’re waiting in line at a soup kitchen. You know, you’re always waiting in line somewhere for something.”
- Disillusionment with the System
 - “It seems a lot of government resources, the more circles they can send you in, the more they will.”

Experience of Homelessness

Major Theme: Mental Illness

- “This is what happened to me. I was diagnosed with bipolar ADH or ADD but I never received the proper treatment or proper care that I needed so that I wouldn't become homeless.”
- “I’m also diagnosed with depression. Well, according to the government, I’m diagnosed with depression. According to these other people, I’ve been diagnosed with bipolar, etc. so I don’t even know. And I’m a Gemini on top of it which further complicates the moodswing-ness.”

Positive Effects of Advocacy

Major Theme: Sharing the Experience

- Educating homeless and non-homeless groups
 - “And when I talk about my life or the alcohol or the crack or the marijuana and I just put it out there. And people can relate because..PAUSE...because I am telling you about my experiences and you do not have to do the research and go through the same problems that I went through.”
 - “I went to an all girls school in 2011 and went up and I have a stack of letters about this high and one of the young ladies, I was talking about doing drugs,..she wrote me a letter that I was thinking about doing drugs but from hearing you talk I will never do drugs.”

Positive Effects of Advocacy

Major Theme: Helping Others

- An Opportunity to Help
 - “Standing up for change and for helping all those who don’t have. Even though I don’t have. I’ve got more than some others.”
- Finding a Calling
 - “I just heard about it and found out....um [pause] what advocacy is. That it’s about helping others [...] That’s how I was raised. So I went to the meeting. So I’m new at it. But I wanted to be part of it. Because I was raised to..to be part of things greater than yourself.”

Positive Effects of Advocacy

Major Theme: Coping / Stabilization of Mental Illness

- Positive Coping Leading to Fewer Episodes / Hospitalization
 - “Psychiatrically I said, I’ve had a lot less episodes, a lot fewer episodes, and they’re a lot further apart. They don’t happen anywhere near the frequency they once were. I don’t get agitated as easily, I can always find someone to talk to. That’s one of the key things, that the advocacy has really opened up is the ability to be able to talk to people, and talk through what I’m going through.”
- Having Something to Focus On
 - “I’m still going through the depression and still going through the anxiety but [...] I mean keep my mind focused on not being depressed all the time. I just constantly, I come to here a lot. To just- just to know that I got something-something to do, a purpose to do, I just don’t think about being depressed too much, that’s all. And I mean I still go through it, but not as often as I did.”

Study Considerations

1. Sampling methods were dependent on who was present at the meetings and ready / willing to participate.
 1. Tended to interview the people who were most involved.
 2. Didn't talk to people who were less engaged.
2. Limited number of interviews. Probably weren't able to capture all of the perspectives and themes that we would have liked.
3. Multiple interviewers in IDIs (non-standardized process, probing different)
4. Focus Groups (talk time of participants is limited, uncomfortability to speak up, personal/sensitive issues may not be shared, confidentiality not guaranteed)

Conclusions

1. The motivations and positive effects of advocacy seem to directly relate to the previous or current experience of homelessness.
2. Participants seem to universally feel a sense of dehumanization and lower quality of treatment through society and their personal experiences.
3. This motivates advocates to speak out for the homeless population. There is a desire to change 'the system' and educate society to decrease stigma.
4. The (positive) position of 'advocate' also seems to contrast previous (negative) life experiences.
 - Community and belonging vs. being ignored or unwanted
 - A sense of purpose and an elevation in society
 - Having a voice vs. not being heard
 - Being treated as human vs. dehumanization

Future Work

- This study provides a foundation for future research.
- Potential areas to explore include:
 - 1) At what point does advocacy engagement begin to have a positive effect?
 - 2) Does it have a different impact on people who are currently homeless versus does who are previously homeless?
 - 3) What are the clinical benefits of advocacy engagement on physical and mental health issues?
 - 4) How can we expand advocacy efforts and engagement to populations that aren't currently being reached?
 - 5) What can be done to improve advocacy resources for neglected and vulnerable populations, such as women and youth who experience homelessness?

Personal Experiences

Mark Schumann

- Board member, Health Care for the Homeless
- Editor-in-chief, *Word on the Street*
- Member, “Faces of Homelessness” Speakers Bureau
- Member, Housing Our Neighbors
- Member, B’More Housing for All

Tony Simmons

- Volunteer, Health Care for the Homeless
- Organizer & member, Residents’ Council
- Member, “Faces of Homelessness” Speakers Bureau
- Contributor, *Word on the Street*
- Member, Housing Our Neighbors
- Member, B’More Housing for All

Beyond Social Change

- The Intersection of Clinical Work and Social Action

- Therapy – Often thought of as private, but to be meaningful, it needs to be brought into the public sphere. It's most meaningful when its taken into the world.
- Advocacy – Often thought of as public, but it's not just about social change. Engagement in social action changes us – and our connections with others.

Given this intersection, how can we facilitate *integration*?

Beyond Social Change

- The Integration of Clinical Work and Social Action

- Recognize, honor and address personal crises that arise
- Provide confidential forum in which to process and address issues and emotions that arise
- Recognize, set and honor limits in order to avoid taking on too much and burning out
- Identify personal benefits as a result of engaging in advocacy and social action
- Practice skills discussed hypothetically in therapy sessions
- Use each as a potential engagement tool for the other

Discussion

- Questions? Clarifications? Critiques?
- What types of advocacy or social action have you undertaken?
- What might you undertake? On what issues?
Using what methods?

B'More Advocacy & Social Action

- “Faces of Homelessness” Speakers Bureau
- Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week
- Homeless Persons’ Memorial Day
- Homeless Persons’ Lobby Day
- Shelter & Street Organizing
- *Word on the Street* Newspaper
- Participatory Action Research

Contact Information

Adam Schneider: aschneider@hchmd.org

Vanessa Borotz: vborotz@hchmd.org

Mark Schumann: markazelinski@yahoo.com

Tony Simmons: tonythetiger@gmail.com

Liz Coleclough: liz.coleclough@gmail.com

Matt Spear: spear.matthew@gmail.com