

35th International Conference on

Psychiatry & Psychosomatic Medicine

November 01-02, 2018 | Brussels, Belgium



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The changing face of youth homelessness

Statement of the Problem: This study seeks to examine the life experiences of homeless adults whose relationship with their parents or their children were impacted by the family's experience of homelessness while raising children. Family systems theory identifies families as a central "system" in each society which exist for the purpose of creating and maintaining the structure and balance inside of the family system while socializing children to the norms, expectations, and internal and external factors that shape life and society (Hearn 1969). Contemporary study of family relationships improved our understanding of the long-lasting impact of the parent-child relationship as well as the role of the larger family system in creating the context in which child development occurs. A variety of individual and environmental factors impact the quality, consistency, and depth of these relationships with varying effects upon the developing child. These effects continue well into adulthood, and can provide resilience against ongoing social issues or predispose children towards risks.

Methodology & Theoretical Orientation: This is an exploratory, qualitative study that uses a grounded theory approach to understanding the lived experiences of families experiencing homelessness, and the specific impact on the relationship between parent and child.

Conclusion & Significance: The results of this study suggest the primary reason that the family become homeless is significant in contextualizing any disruption to the parent-child relationship and any impact on family cohesion. Issues of substance abuse by a parent, parental incarceration, child abuse, and domestic violence were all factors that both impacted the family's housing stability and the parent-child relationship. This presentation will discuss the specific impact of these factors on child development and life trajectory in early adulthood, as well as potential treatment interventions.

Biography

Lissa Ramsepaul obtained her MSW from The Catholic University of America in 2009, after completing a course of study where she received dual training in both direct practice and program development & evaluation. She holds a clinical social work license. Her PhD thesis on Risk and Resilience in formerly homeless youth, reflects her lifelong interest in working with individuals, communities, and larger systems, alleviating the impact of multifarious social issues and suffering among marginalized populations. She is passionate about blending best practices of working with underserved populations with management, advocacy, and larger systemic change. She has 22 years of hands-on experience working in the non-profit sector. Her service to vulnerable populations began with direct service delivery as a crisis counselor in the early 1990s. Today, she works as an independent consultant and has served in leadership positions for non-profit organizations to ensure that the most vulnerable clients received the highest level of care and service.

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