

Homelessness postmodernist and feminist perspective



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Karen Anderson Social analysis - Homelessness Feminist and postmodernist perspectives ACAP Being Homeless in Australia, what does that actually mean? The statistics show that homelessness in Australia is a growing and a concerning problem involving people from all walks of life and in all parts of Australia. This paper will examine the evidence of homelessness and analyse the media's coverage of homelessness with postmodernist theory and then the feminist theory.

The feminist perspective in the media is a view on homelessness as something that may be brought about by oppression from patriarchy, capitalism or imperialism and that women as a group need to set forth to create infrastructures to assist women in need from not just homelessness but also for rape and battered women. "Poverty, Illiteracy and homelessness are critical woman's issues throughout the world". (Freedman, 2006, p. 98) . The media's postmodernist perspective views homelessness in a panoptic way, not picking only women's issues to report on. What is homelessness?

Who are the homeless? The traditional symbol of homelessness was the old man on a park bench somewhere in the city, is that still true.? This essay will attempt to answer this question. To be able to deal with the homeless, better visions of who are actually homeless and what they require needs to be investigated, to ensure social aid is provided where it is most needed. (Cortese, 2003) Issue. Homelessness. Homelessness is a social problem worldwide. In Australia, it is an ever-increasing issue with numbers of homeless people growing at an alarming rate.

At the last count, the homeless population was 105, 000 people; close to half of these people were younger than 25 (ref ?) . Men made up 58% of the numbers and women 42%. (ABS, 2008) . These numbers had risen 5% since the 2001 census(ABS, 2004) . There was a concerning number of indigenous people homeless,; 17% of SAAP- (Supported accommodation assistance program) clients were indigenous, this is concerning when indigenous people make up only 2. 4% of the general population (Chamberlain, 2008) . Vincent Morello elieves there is also an unseen portion of homeless people and uses the 2006 census to show 44, 000 young people staying with friends or relatives : “ couch surfing”, and reports that this can lead to a future of prostitution and adult homelessness. (Morello, 2010) There are more families’ homeless than ever before and these people need desperate assistance to gain shelter for their children (Ref ?) . Mission Australia, one of Australia’s largest providers of assistance for homeless people, despairs that it must turn away 60% of them every day.

Mr Hall from Mission Australia blames societies values and priorities for not building the capacity to assist the homeless after two decades of prosperity. (Hall, 2009) . Domestic and family violence has been found to be the largest contributor to homelessness in Australia (Australian Government, 2008, para 26) . In a study of Homeless people (Buhrich. , Teeson. , & Hodder, 1998) found that rape had occurred to half of all Homeless women and 10% of homeless men. “ A serious challenge to welfare policy discourse is taking trauma and abuse seriously as a constant driver of homelessness” Robinson in (Morrison, 2009, n.) . The Governments previous homeless assistance program SAAP is being updated: the government first released the Green

Paper in 2008 – ‘ Which way home’, Tanya Plibersek inviting public discussion to discover the plight of the homeless. (Australian Government, 2008b) then the white paper later in the year setting a target that it would reduce homeless by half by the year 2020. using early intervention programs, sustainable housing, economics and social participation. (Australian Government, 2008c) .

Tony Abbot when interviewed said he would not support Mr Rudd’s homeless package, the reason he justifies is that the homeless choose to be homeless; using a Gospel of Mathew quote, “ the poor will always be with us”. (Perusco, 2010) , in response to this, The Sydney Morning Herald released a story rebutting Mr Abbotts views “ seeing homelessness as some kind of lifestyle choice reflects an attitude completely out of touch with reality... Individual choices are there but they don’t happen in a vacuum, people leading comfortable, stable lives generally do not decide to become homeless” (Tanner, 2010) . Postmodernism

Baudrillard emphasised signs that represent reality in human life and the “ simulacrum” being an image that is not what it appears to be. (Van Kreiken. , Habibis. , Smith. , Hutchins. , Haralambos. ,& Holborn, 2006, p. 675) The media sometimes offers to its viewers the image of the homeless as deviants, the old drunk on the park bench, or the bag lady with her shopping trolley, when in reality homelessness effects all ages, genders and ethnicities (ref ?). When journalists use terms like “ homeless drunks bumming a cigarette”(Albrechtsen, 2010) they paint an image that is inconsistent with what is actually occurring in society.

Lyotard regarded language games as a distracter, and the rules of language in institutions precluding innovation and new thought. (Lyotard, 1984) The Age Headlines “ Rudd fluffed a chance at real health reform” Inferring that the Labour Party had not considered the fact, that everything in society is linked to something else. Therefore, the Health reform had not addressed homelessness as a cause for mental illness and substance abuse, and was not addressing primary care and prevention (Davidson, 2010) , in effect not opening the language of health to include homelessness. Crook. , Pakulski. & Waters, 1992 in (Van Kreiken et al. , 2006, p. 502) discuss “ class decomposition” explaining that the members of a particular social class will become increasingly different to each other. Mathew Moore (date ?) in an article about regional homelessness explains that the face of homelessness has changed, and the mould has been broken,; interviewing Dr Marks he says “ This report shows them how homelessness is a wildly varying experience. “(Moore, 2009, n. p) . Although at the bottom of the social class, the needy and homeless in society are becoming increasingly homogenous too.

Feminism. Walby, in (Van Kreiken et al. , 2006, p. 669) believes that six structures in society have a Patriarchal nature; household relations, paid work, violence, culture, sexuality and the state continue to uphold the dominance in society of the male. Certainly, in homelessness, women are often overlooked by the state, with Mission Australia in a press release, reporting in Sydney there was a major shortage of beds for homeless women, women had been turned away in their thousands by one shelter alone (Ref >?). There are not enough services for women.

A larger range of services has been available to men with a “ city wide pool of crisis accommodation. (Dang, 2007; SMH, 2007) . These women, many fleeing from domestic violence or abuse (Australian Government, 2008a) , are driven from their homes, then are again victimised by government authorities and aid agencies who provide non gender specific shelters that do not adequately provide for them. Given the government have recognised this disparity they have included funding in 2010 to assist women’s homeless issues see (Bond, 2010) .

Baumgardner. , & Richards in (Genz, 2010) discuss the new woman calling it girlie feminism, and explain that women know how to make girl stuff work for women. Or (de Beauvoir, 1993) stating that women know best the intimate feminine world of women as we have grown with our roots in it, they could be referring to fashion and makeup or maybe women in Government becoming responsible as decision makers for women’s affairs? Is this not reverse discrimination? Danielle, 2010) In the big issue describes Sydney’s top businesswomen, coming together to discuss and co-ordinate a sustainable enterprise for women to help get them back on their feet. Brooks 1997 in (Van Kreiken et al. , 2006) brings up post feminism explaining that the world has changed and all women are different, from all walks of life and economic circumstances so to blame the men (patriarchs) for all of women’s oppression is outdated and futile. Different is the word she believes should be used instead of equality to explain the differences between how men and women fare in their daily lives.

Grimke 1838 in (Raitt, n. d) writes although middle class women are closer to men in equality than are their poor cousins, they still can be restricted by <https://assignbuster.com/homelessness-postmodernist-and-feminist-perspective/>

men. Homelessness of women from statistics is predominantly caused by domestic violence and abuse see para2 pg 17 (AIHW, 2009) , the difference between Grimke's eras and now is that society is now trying to help these women escape their oppression and start a new life free from a subservient life of violence. These women escaping violence do not feel safe in generic shelter accommodation. Tully, 2003) The Australian Government has released its safe at home model whereby the perpetrator of domestic violence will be forced to leave the home instead of the victims, this service began in Tasmania in 2004 and will be rolled out as a plan to increase reporting for victims and quick return to their own homes for families. For more information. see Green Paper section Three (Australian Government, 2008b) . Compare and Contrast In relation to homelessness, the comparisons between post modernism and traditional feminism could be vast.

However, the two theories converge when post feminism is used. A traditional feminist would have questioned the patriarchal and institutional causes to the females that are homeless and would probably use the domestic violence approach to make a case. This however does not aid the homeless; it seems women today are equal, at least in numbers to men. Women have the right to vote, to own property, are top level executives in major corporations and hold high ranking office in political and opposition parties but they are still outnumbered by their male counterparts. (EOWA, 2006) .

However, this has not prevented other women from abuse and becoming homeless, for different reasons to the way men become homeless. A

postmodernist version more inclusively would seek to question why so many
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are homeless and draws upon many different streams to this condition, i. e. job loss, economic downturn, house prices, alcoholism, mental illness, domestic abuse and social concept. These reasons would then be questioned how one lost his job. Did mental illness cause homelessness or was it the other way around? What is going on in a domestic abuse perpetrators life that creates this violence towards his family?

There is no longer one " Meta Narrative"(Lyotard, 1984) in modern society for homelessness. People become homeless for many reasons and one government cure all would not fix it. Thankfully, the Government in Australia is now studying the ways that lead to homelessness and providing individual case-by-case assistance to the homeless. (Australian Government, 2008c)

The media excerpts used for this paper were more relevant to a postmodernist construct than they were to feminism. It seems these days that feminist perspective is a dirty word linked to the radical feminists like Dworkin, MacKinnon and Jeffrys. (Moore & Reynolds, 2004) . Quinn. , & Radtke 2006) in studies of university students found that the feminist position is virtually untenable; although many live by the principles of feminism they will not publicly state that they are a feminist. " The extremist feminism interpretative repertoire served a sort of regulatory function within the research conversations, drawing participants away from versions of feminist discourse with political meaning beyond equality. " (Quinn. , & Radtke, 2006, p. 195) In Conclusion, homelessness is a sad social fact of all societies Australia is not exempt, the homeless count continues to rise census to census.

No longer is the face of the homeless an old male alcoholic. The government in Australia is implementing plans to reduce homeless numbers by 2020. The postmodernist theory seems to be a better fit with the media on this issue than feminism. Homeless women especially victims of abuse do need special care to be able to deal with their plight and while there are many generic shelters available they do not cater for the traumatised women and children fleeing from abuse, these women's shelters are only now becoming a big issue in the media, thanks to the feminist drivers.

Homelessness is a condition that does not happen without precluding factors; those factors are many and varied and suit postmodern examination. Postmodernism and post feminism appear to meld to an extent and become more homogenised. See media excerpts attached. References Australian Bureau of Statistics. ABS. (2004). 4102. 0 - Australian Social Trends, 2004. Retrieved April 26, 2010 from <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/>

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