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The impact of tertiary-level humanities education for homeless and marginalised people

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Abstract

In Sydney, tertiary-level education in the humanities is offered to homeless and other marginalised people in the form of two courses: the 'Clemente' program and the 'Catalyst' program. These programs are provided for the purpose of building the capacities of marginalised people, with the aim of assisting them to exit the cycles of poverty and homelessness. It is hypothesised that humanities education can empower these people to reflect on their circumstances, realise their capacities, and then reengage with their communities. The present paper discusses the results of initial research into the impact of the programs on their students. This discussion focuses on perceived changes in self-efficacy, social connectedness, and interpersonal relating. The paper also critically examines the nature and purpose of the programs, and future directions for research into education programs for disadvantaged people.

Keywords: Education for marginalised people

Introduction

Throughout history and throughout the world, societies have been confronted and challenged by the problem of homelessness. This problem has a negative impact not only on those who are homeless, but on the communities in which they live. The present paper explores a recent and innovative approach for assisting homeless adults to reengage with society; an approach that relies on the provision of tertiary-level education in the humanities.

Homelessness defined

Homelessness has been defined in many ways, which reflects the heterogeneity of the homeless population as well as variations in the nature of homelessness over time and across societies (Norris, Thompson, Eardley, & Hoffman, 2005). However, reasonable agreement has been reached as to the appropriate definition of homelessness for contemporary Australian society. In short, homelessness is defined as the condition of those who do not "have access to safe, secure, and adequate housing" (Mission Australia, 2004). Specifically, homelessness has been defined in terms of three non-mutually exclusive *levels* (Chamberlain, 1999). These levels are as follows:

- *Primary homelessness* occurs for those without 'conventional' accommodation or shelter, including people who live on the streets, in public areas (such as parks), in derelict buildings, or in vehicles.
- *Secondary homelessness* occurs for those who make frequent transitions from one form of temporary shelter to another, including people who stay in emergency accommodation (such as night shelters), in youth/women's refuges, or with friends or relatives (because they do not have accommodation of their own).
- *Tertiary homelessness* occurs for those who reside in boarding houses on a medium- to long-term basis, but do not have security of tenure. Private boarding houses provide shared bathroom and kitchen facilities, and are not self-contained.

All three levels of homelessness are prevalent, with approximately 100,000 people experiencing homelessness on a given night in Australia. The actual number of people who have experienced homelessness at some point in their lives is even greater, because many

individuals cycle in and out of homelessness (Thompson, Pollio, Eyrich, Bradbury, & North, 2004). Indeed, Neil and Fopp (1994) point out that the definition of homelessness should incorporate a temporal dimension: homelessness "may be chronic, it may consist of a single acute crisis in a person's life, or it may be a state entered and existed intermittently" (p.1).

There is substantial diversity amongst homeless people in terms of age, gender, and other demographic characteristics. In Australia, approximately 50% of all homeless people are under 25 years in age, 40% are women, and 10% are Indigenous (Chamberlain & MacKenzie, 2003). The causes and antecedents of homelessness are also diverse, and include poverty, unemployment, mental illness, substance abuse, family breakdown, and domestic violence (Neil & Fopp, 1994).

The negative correlates of homelessness

Homelessness predicts a host of negative outcomes (Neil & Fopp, 1994). In particular, it has been found that "homelessness compromises health" (Dawes, Brydson, McLean, & Newton, 2003, p.297). Homeless persons are significantly more likely to suffer from preventable health problems, and to experience premature death (Grenier, 1999; Plumb, 1997; Surber, Dwyer, Ryan, Goldfinger, & Kelly, 1988). Amongst homeless people, there is a significantly higher prevalence of illnesses such as "trauma, infestations...problems arising from exposure, nutritional and vitamin deficiencies, and peripheral vascular diseases" (Surber et al., 1988, p.116). Although these illnesses can often be easily treated, homeless people are less likely to seek, receive, or gain access to treatments for their health problems (Bines, 1994; Stearn, Stillwell, & Heuston, 1989). Also, the treatments sought by homeless people are often limited, or are inappropriate for their health needs. Thus, homeless people often live with untreated diseases, placing their health at great risk.

Along with higher rates of physical disease and death, the homeless population also experiences a higher incidence of mental illness (Dawes et al., 2003; Surber et al., 1988). Surber et al. (1988) estimated that approximately 40% of homeless Americans suffered from a major mental illness. In one study of homeless women (Hagen & Ivanoff, 1988), significantly elevated levels of anxiety, somatisation, depression, and interpersonal sensitivity were found. The homeless women also expressed confusion, shame, and a desire for isolation. In all, it has been observed that "homeless individuals suffer from a large number of severe medical and psychiatric illnesses and the frequency with which these illnesses occur is far greater than for those who are not homeless" (Surber et al., 1988, p.116).

In addition to physical and mental health problems, homeless people are also at risk of other negative outcomes. Homeless individuals often live within hostile environments, and are therefore more likely to be subjected to acts of violence, crime, and abuse (Cohen, 1989, Neil & Fopp, 1994). Furthermore, homeless persons are highly marginalised, alienated, and stigmatised. This often leads to degraded social skills, and deprives these people of adequate emotional or cognitive stimulation (Cohen, 1989). In addition, homeless persons are more likely to experience the following difficulties/problems (Neil & Fopp, 1994):

- family breakdowns
- difficulties accessing education
- unemployment
- difficulties obtaining social security benefits
- social isolation and loneliness
- loss of sense of self and identity
- frustration and powerlessness
- substance abuse problems

The problems faced by individual homeless people are accompanied by the detrimental effects of homelessness on the broader community. As David Eldridge - Chair of the Prime Minister's Taskforce on Youth Homelessness - has pointed out:

People will do whatever it takes to survive, including turning to crime...As a community, we need to be responsive to people who are homeless, not just for moral and social reasons, but also for the sake of the stability of the entire community. (Salvation Army Homeless Services [On-line])

Faced with the poverty that almost always accompanies homelessness, many homeless people resort to criminal and other antisocial behaviour, in order to acquire money for food, clothing, and other supplies. A number of homeless people abuse or are dependent on alcohol and other drugs, which also leads to criminal behaviour (Neil & Fopp, 1994). Homelessness has a negative effect on the community in other ways. The cost (to governments, community agencies, and other organisations) of treating the problems arising from homelessness is significant, and society loses "the productive social input of people affected by these problems" (Neil & Fopp, 1994, p.22).

Confronted with the costs and negative effects of homelessness (at the individual, family, and community levels), society has responded in a number of ways, with varying degrees of success. It is beyond the scope of the present paper to discuss the wide array of interventions and strategies employed in addressing homelessness. Rather, this paper is concerned with the provision of *education* as a means for assisting individuals to exit the cycle of homelessness.

Educational assistance for homeless people

As part of efforts to address homelessness, education is sometimes provided to homeless people, usually for the purpose of making the homeless recipients more able to find and maintain employment or housing. In other words, education is often provided with 'economic' or 'labour market' goals in mind. These goals are important, because homelessness is often the result of poverty or other economic factors. As such, education for homeless people has traditionally been focused on vocational or 'life' skills. However, it has been realised that education can potentially yield other benefits for homeless people, beyond increasing their vocational capacities or employability. This has led to the recent development of innovative approaches to education for the homeless. These approaches originated from the work of Earl Shorris, the American author who devised the educational program known as the *Clemente Course* (Shorris, 2000).

The Clemente Course

In 1997, while researching a book on poverty, Shorris initiated the Clemente Course. The Course offers tertiary-level humanities education to poor, underprivileged, and homeless people. Clemente began in New York City and has since been adopted in other American cities, and in other countries including Canada, Korea, and Australia. In Australia, tertiary-level humanities education is provided to homeless people through two programs, which are offered by Australian Catholic University (ACU National). These programs are based on the original Clemente Course, and are coordinated by two community agencies. One program, coordinated by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, is known as the Clemente Course. The other program, coordinated by Mission Australia, is known as 'Catalyst'. Presently, the Clemente and Catalyst programs are provided at two inner-city sites in Sydney, with another Catalyst program to be commenced in Brisbane in July 2006.

The purpose of Clemente and Catalyst: promoting 'reengagement'

One might ask why Shorris decided to provide tertiary-level humanities education to marginalised and homeless people. Essentially, the purpose of Clemente is to promote *reengagement*. Shorris believed that humanities subjects - such as Philosophy, Literature, History, and Art - have the potential to empower homeless people to think about and reflect on the world in which they live (Shorris, 2000). In turn, this intellectual engagement can promote a broader reengagement with society, allowing individuals to exit the cycles of poverty and homelessness. Indeed, Clemente is fundamentally different from the vocational or 'life skills' education courses traditionally offered to homeless people. Unlike these courses, Clemente is provided within a genuine *academic* framework, rather than a welfare framework. As such, Clemente students are viewed and treated as university students, not as welfare recipients. This perspective is empowering; it communicates to the students that they are worthy and capable of sophisticated social participation (Shorris, 2000). Thus, both the subject matter and the philosophical outlook of Clemente serve the purpose of empowering the marginalised students to reengage with their communities. Indeed, the students in Clemente are viewed as active agents, who have the capacity to reconnect with society and change their lives.

The concept of 'engagement'

At this point, it is important for the concept of *engagement* – which is central to the Clemente Course – to be discussed. Without an understanding of engagement - and its implications for homeless people - one will struggle to appreciate the relevance of the Clemente Course.

Cohen (1989) defined engagement within the context of human service delivery for homeless people: "*Engagement* is defined as the process of establishing mutual respect and trust in the helping relationship" (p.505). This definition can be applied at a more general level. That is, the present article defines engagement as the process of establishing trust in the *broader community*. In other words, the engaged person will feel connected with their community in a meaningful way. Due to the marginalisation and alienation associated with homelessness, homeless people are described as being disengaged. So, for a homeless person, reengagement might be expressed through:

- accessing medical or psychiatric services
- finding adequate employment
- finding adequate housing
- establishing a social network
- making friends
- repairing family relationships
- attending institutions such as community centres, libraries, churches, universities, colleges, TAFE, etc

Disengagement has also been described as 'disaffiliation' (Neil & Fopp, 1994), or the loss of supportive social networks and of ties to the community. Neil and Fopp (1994) argue that disaffiliation "reduces the chances that homelessness can be avoided, or a rapid exit from homelessness achieved" (p.90). Therefore, in addressing homelessness, many policies are aimed at promoting the 'social integration' of homeless people; i.e. the establishment by homeless individuals of informal networks of friends and acquaintances within the community.

For a person to pursue engagement, they must feel empowered to do so. For Cohen (1989), 'empowerment' refers to "the critical human need of being an effective and creative

participant in one's environment" (p.507). The concept of empowerment serves to emphasise the importance of engagement. Unless a person feels that their efforts will have an impact on their environment, they will not be motivated to participate and engage in the community. To exit the cycle of homelessness, an individual must have sufficient self-efficacy for reengaging in society; they must feel empowered to participate more fully in their community.

A wide range of services, interventions, and other strategies have been employed to aid homeless people. However, if the targeted individuals are disengaged, these efforts are less likely to be successful (Cohen, 1989).

Vangeest and Johnson (2002) examined the proximate causes of homelessness in a random probability sample of 481 homeless people. Disaffiliation was identified as a significant and direct precursor to homelessness. Specifically, it was found that those who receive less support from relatives and friends, or who participate less frequently in the workforce, are at greater risk of becoming homeless. Vangeest and Johnson (2002) concluded that those who are less involved in a "collective existence...i.e. working, raising a family, etc" (p.460) or are less bonded with society and its institutions, are more likely to become homeless. Vangeest and Johnson (2002) concluded that it is crucial that homeless people are empowered to strengthen their ties to society, and to participate more fully in collective activities.

Letiecq, Anderson, and Koblinsky (1998) also provide evidence of the importance of engagement. They found homelessness to be associated with less social support and less frequent contact with relatives or friends. Similarly, Susser et al. (1997) found that formerly homeless individuals are less likely to fall back into homelessness when they develop positive social connections. In addition, Anderson and Koblinsky (1995) point to the importance of family bonds and interpersonal communication for those who have recently exited homelessness.

In their exploratory study of 12 formerly homeless individuals, Thompson et al. (2004) identified the significant contribution of interpersonal relationships in facilitating exits from homelessness. The participants acknowledged the importance of *reconnecting*; of drawing support from their relationships with family members and with service providers. According to Thompson et al. (2004), the diminished interpersonal relationships of homeless individuals are indicative of "institutional disaffiliation (and) weakening ties to social institutions" (p.428). It was therefore suggested that formerly homeless individuals should be assisted in establishing more substantial social connections, in order that they feel less marginalised and become more empowered to stay out of the cycle of homelessness (Thompson et al., 2004). In facilitating greater social connectedness, it was recommended that homeless and formerly homeless persons are encouraged to participate in social, family, religious, or other communal activities. Essentially, this recommendation highlights the crucial contribution of reengagement to successful exits from homelessness.

From the preceding evidence, it is clear that engagement has a significant impact with respect to homelessness. Those who are more engaged are less likely to become homeless, are more likely to exit homelessness, and remain homeless for shorter periods of time. The importance of engagement is even more obvious in light of the fact that disengagement can be self-perpetuating: disengaged individuals are more likely to utilise survival strategies that lead to further marginalisation (Neil & Fopp, 1994; Thompson et al., 2004). The implication is that engagement should be fostered in those who are homeless, formerly homeless, or at-risk of becoming homeless. The Clemente and Catalyst programs are aimed at precisely this goal. Initial research into Clemente at Sydney suggests that the program is indeed having the desired impact.

Initial research into the Clemente program

In Australia, the Clemente program is coordinated by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, and is delivered at eastern Sydney within one of the Society's community settings for homeless people: Vincentian Village. ACU National began to offer the Clemente program in 2003, in collaboration with the Sydney Catholic Archdiocese, the Sisters of Charity, and Sydney City Council. The program, based upon Shorris' original course, was delivered over the course of two years, during which time the following four subjects were offered (one subject per semester):

- Ethics
- A History of Modern Australia
- Spirituality
- Art History

Each of these subjects was delivered over the course of twelve weeks. For each week, the students attended a one-hour lecture, as well as individual study sessions with their 'learning partners'. The learning partners acted as tutors for the students, assisting them to develop their academic abilities. Counselling and welfare assistance for the students remained the responsibility of Vincentian Village. The learning partners were volunteers from the corporate, government, and community sectors.

The lecturers for the Clemente program were selected on the basis of their scholarship with the program's areas of study, and their willingness to work with homeless people in a community setting. The students were selected on the basis of interviews, in which their suitability for the program was assessed. The assessors selected those applicants who demonstrated adequate levels of intellectual and personal functioning, as well as an attitude of passion and commitment with regard to receiving tertiary-level education. The Clemente program at Vincentian Village was the first humanities education course offered to homeless people in Australia. The initial research into Clemente informs understandings of the Clemente *and* Catalyst programs, as both programs are governed by the same educational principles and organisational structures.

Yashin-Shaw, Howard, and Butcher (2005) reported on the results of the initial investigation into the impact of Clemente in Australia. The investigators conducted semi-structured interviews with the students, lecturers, learning partners, staff, and coordinators involved in the program. Focus groups discussions were also run with the students, and a teaching session was videotaped to provide additional data on the effects of the program. Qualitative data was gathered from the interviews, discussions, and video footage. It was concluded that the Clemente program had a noticeable impact, with evidence of increased self-efficacy and empowerment amongst the students (Yashin-Shaw et al., 2005). The following quotations are taken from transcripts of the interviews with the students, and demonstrate the students' perceptions of having greater self-efficacy and being more engaged as a result of the program:

Since taking this course I'm looking out for job opportunities...for a supervisor's position or something like that, which I think I'm more than capable of doing

Clemente...is a very worthwhile program. It's not just vocational, it's not job skills...it's teaching you how to...think more deeply

I went to the library; I haven't been into a library for years

(Clemente) has given me back confidence in my ability

(Clemente) can have a great effect on the...psychology of the person who has done the course

It's good to feel so confident – you'd be much less likely to present difficulties, socially

Indeed, there were clear indications that the students felt more engaged, and that they possessed greater self-efficacy as to their capacity to reconnect with society. Yashin-Shaw et al. (2005) also suggested that the positive impact of Clemente might translate into benefits for the broader community, with the students becoming less alienated and reactive against society. Increased engagement was also indicated by the efforts of students to make contact with other marginalised people, in order to recruit new students for the program. Indeed, the students spoke of their appreciation for the teaching style of the lecturers and for the one-on-one sessions with the learning partners. They perceived Clemente as offering a safe and empowering environment in which to learn (Yashin-Shaw et al., 2005). In a separate study of Clemente, the learning partners reported significant levels of engagement with students, and described their relationships with the students as characterised by mutual respect (Henson & Lowe, 2005). The learning partners also saw the students as authentic, individual people, rather than as defined by the condition of 'homelessness' (Henson & Lowe, 2005). Furthermore, the delivery of the program within a community setting (rather than a university setting) was seen as allowing the students to feel less stigmatised and alienated.

The impact of Clemente was also appreciated by the lecturers and staff involved in delivering the program, according to whom the students experienced increased feelings of self-efficacy, achievement, autonomy, and social connectedness. In addition, the learning partners observed a greater sense of confidence and personal responsibility within the students (Yashin-Shaw et al., 2005). Yashin-Shaw et al.'s (2005) data also indicated that the students began to socialise more frequently, to develop better empathic abilities, and to enjoy improvements in their relationships. Thus, there was evidence that the students were becoming more socially and interpersonally engaged.

In all, each of the interviewed students described Clemente as helpful and rewarding, and this perspective was corroborated by the other interviewees. The findings of Yashin-Shaw et al. (2005) replicated the results of research into the Clemente programs in America, which also identified increases in self-efficacy and a heightened sense of empowerment among students (Shorris, 2000).

Future directions for research into Clemente and Catalyst

The initial research into Clemente yielded evidence to suggest that tertiary-level humanities education in a community setting has a beneficial impact on homeless students (Henson & Lowe, 2005; Yashin-Shaw et al., 2005). However, there were important limitations to this research. It was necessary for the investigators to rely predominantly on subjective, interview-based data; and no measurements were made as to the potential longer-term effects of the program. Furthermore, the sample size was small and methodological precision was somewhat lacking. Of course, these limitations were to be expected, considering that Yashin-Shaw et al.'s (2005) study was carried out as a first step towards a more complete evaluation of Clemente. Indeed, the initial investigation has certainly informed the plans for the next phase of research, particularly with regard to the conceptual framework that will be used in future evaluation. Specifically, Yashin-Shaw et al.'s (2005) research has drawn attention to the homeless students' perception of the shifts and transitions that occurred during their time in Clemente. From the perspective of the students, they underwent what could be described as a 'journey'; a series of changes and progressions towards reengagement. This perspective is captured in the following quotation taken from an

interview with one of the Clemente students:

It's all about the journey...that I went through for what my soul needed
(Yashin-Shaw et al., 2005)

The next phase of research into the Clemente and Catalyst programs will draw upon the concept of the journey, in order to reflect the personal growth and change experienced by the homeless students. The following discussions will examine two important methodological approaches – ‘Journey Mapping’ and ‘Theory of Change’ – which will be utilised in the next phase of journey-focused evaluations of Clemente and Catalyst.

Examining the students’ experiences: the ‘Journey Mapping’ methodology

Journey Mapping is a methodology developed by program evaluator Barry Kibel. Journey Mapping was born out of Kibel’s desire to “do justice” (p.1) to the lives of program participants (Kibel, 2005). Essentially, Kibel wished to gather data in such a way as to capture in rich detail the stories, experiences, and perspectives of the individuals involved in programs. For Kibel, conventional data-gathering methods (such as questionnaires or interviews) are important, but they are not sufficient for adequately representing the events and transitions that occur during the delivery of a program.

For the purposes of program evaluation, a journey is defined as “the movement of an individual, family, etc. from one life status to another” (Kibel, 2005, p.4). In other words, a journey consists of the transitions that occur between the various events, circumstances, and situations of a person’s life. Within a given program, each participant undergoes a journey, regardless of whether the program’s aims are accomplished. In the context of Journey Mapping, the program participants are all those who are involved in the program, including coordinators, managers, planners, and the recipients of program services. The Journey Mapping methodology involves gathering data from the personal narratives of these participants.

When the Journey Mapping methodology is employed, program participants are asked to reflect on and document the experiences and changes that occur for themselves and for fellow participants. The participants who do this are referred to as ‘journey mappers’. Each mapper makes regular journal entries, in which they provide detailed accounts and observations of their journey and the journeys of others. Often, the mappers are asked to engage in “directed journaling” (Kibel, 2005, p.5), whereby they record their entries in response to probes. Probes are constructed by the program evaluators in order to elicit specific information from the mappers. Thus, direct journaling is akin to semi-structured interviewing. Furthermore, the mappers will often be asked to respond to Likert-type scales. These scales are included so as to provide quantitative measurements, which complement the rich qualitative data gathered from the mappers’ narratives. The Journey Mapping methodology also allows the mappers to submit their journal entries (and other responses) online, or using specialised software (Kibel, 2005).

Once a program has been delivered, and the participants’ journeys have been fully mapped, the mappers’ journal entries and responses are analysed. From this analysis, significant themes and patterns are identified, which inform the conclusions drawn by the evaluators as to the effectiveness and impact of the program. These conclusions are complemented by additional data gathered from other methodologies, such as those involving interview, questionnaire, and behavioural observations. One of the key benefits of the Journey Mapping approach is that the qualitative narrative-based data is drawn from multiple sources, such as the program coordinators, managers, and recipients. Thus, the evaluators receive comprehensive feedback as to the impact of the program on its participants.

The next phase of research into the Clemente and Catalyst programs will utilise the techniques and procedures of the Journey Mapping methodology, to address the limitations of the initial research. Indeed, while Journey Mapping yields subjective data, the experiences of a given participant are gauged from the narratives of multiple observers, thereby ensuring higher reliability. These narratives are also sampled at multiple points in time, which allows the investigators to track the changes experienced by the students, thereby overcoming another limitation of the initial research. Furthermore, Journey Mapping provides a comprehensive picture of the participants' journeys, through the gathering of both qualitative, narrative-based data and quantitative, scale-based data. Thus, the Clemente and Catalyst programs will be assessed with greater methodological precision and accuracy. This assessment will not only provide rich, qualitative data from multiple perspectives, it will also allow the 'voices' of the homeless students to be aired and heard. As such, the proposed evaluation strategy is in keeping with the aims of Clemente and Catalyst: to empower homeless and marginalised people. In addition, Journey Mapping will enable the program investigators to track the progress of the homeless students, which will provide indications as to the longer-term impact of the programs and to the causal influence of humanities education on the students.

Assessing the effects of Clemente and Catalyst: the 'Theory of Change' approach

The phrase 'Theory of Change' has been used in reference to a variety of research approaches. In the present article, the phrase is used in reference to the conceptualisation formulated by Weiss (1995). According to Weiss, every social program is "based on explicit or implicit *theories* (italics added) about how and why the program will work" (Weiss, 1995, p.66). The Theory of Change approach to evaluation involves the identification by the relevant stakeholders of the assumptions underlying their program. In turn, this allows for the construction of appropriate measures with which to assess the effectiveness of the program. Weiss (1995) suggested Theory of Change as an alternative approach to the standard evaluation practice of relying on pre-existing measures and on quantitative outcome indicators. Indeed, there are numerous potential benefits for investigators who employ a Theory of Change-based evaluation strategy. Primarily, the identification of underlying assumptions ensures that the evaluation is focused on the most relevant dimensions of the program (Weiss, 1995). Furthermore, by tracking the eventuation or otherwise of the outcomes predicted by their theories, the evaluators are in a better position to claim that the program's effects are in fact due to the influence of the program, rather than an external or confounding factor. In the same way, the evaluators are also in a better position to claim that the results of their evaluation would hold true for similar programs (which are based on the same theories). A Theory of Change approach is also likely to allow the evaluators to discern precisely which aspects of the program are responsible for observed outcomes, and which aspects need to be improved (Weiss, 1995). A further benefit of the approach is that it is well suited to even the most complex programs, such as community-wide initiatives (Weiss, 1995). As such, it is appropriate for use in the context of Clemente and Catalyst, and their associated complexities and sensitivities.

The Theory of Change approach demands that the various practitioners and coordinators involved in program delivery reach a consensus on how and why the program will achieve its aims. When this is not done, the practitioners and coordinators:

Usually...haven't thought about the assumptions on which the program is based but proceed intuitively on the basis of professional training, experience, common sense, observation, and informal feedback from others. (Weiss, 1995, p.71)

Without disregarding the intuitions of those involved in program delivery, it is far more helpful for them to actually set out – in detail – the underlying theoretical basis of their program. Once the strengths, aims, and limitations of the program are precisely identified, the evaluation can be tailored to address these important features. In the case of the Clemente and Catalyst programs, the Theory of Change approach will help future investigators to recognise those aspects of the programs which lead to beneficial results, and the ways in which the programs might fail to meet the expectations of stakeholders. As Weiss (1995) states:

When the evaluator seeks to elicit formulations of program theory from those engaged in the initiatives, they may begin to see some of the *leaps of faith* (italics added) that are embedded in it. (p.72)

One might say that the primary ‘leap of faith’ embedded in the Clemente and Catalyst programs is that the students’ intellectual engagement with university education will lead to broader engagement with social institutions and with the community. In other words, the theory of change underlying Clemente and Catalyst states that tertiary-level humanities education can change the level of engagement of homeless people. Future evaluations should therefore be designed in accordance with this theory, in order that the theory be either confirmed or disconfirmed. As discussed earlier, the initial research gives cause for hope that this theory is indeed accurate, but only further investigations will satisfactorily settle the matter.

Journeys and Theories: an integrative plan for future research

As mentioned earlier, the next phase of research into the Clemente and Catalyst programs will make use of both the Journey Mapping and Theory of Change approaches. Journey Mapping will allow richly detailed data to be gathered on the experiences of the participants, and Theory of Change will allow these experiences to be measured against the aims of the programs. Even if the programs do not lead to the ‘theorised’ reengagement, it will be important to learn about the transitions and life events experienced by the homeless students. Thus, even if Clemente and Catalyst are evaluated as being ineffective, the evaluations will nonetheless provide valuable data on homelessness. Fortunately, the Theory of Change approach seems suited to the Journey Mapping methodology. Indeed, as Weiss (1995) asserted, program theories “represent the stories that people tell about how problems arise and how they can be solved” (p.72). So, it seems that the concept of ‘story’ is related to both Journey Mapping and Theory of Change. On one hand, the program participants will tell personal stories about their life journeys. On the other hand, the program evaluators will formulate stories about the expected progress and outcomes of the programs. To the extent that the participants’ experiences conform to the evaluators’ theorised expectations, the programs will be demonstrated to be effective. Thus, it can be argued that Journey Mapping and Theory of Change are complementary: Theory of Change provides hypotheses that can be tested using Journey Mapping. The next phase of research into Clemente and Catalyst will proceed in accordance with this perspective.

Journeying along pathways towards Change: links to Pathway models

The measurement of progress and transitions – using Journey Mapping and Theory of Change – is in keeping with other research into homelessness that focuses on the concept of ‘pathways’. That is, the concept of journey implies some form of travel, which in turn evokes the idea of a pathway, along which an individual might travel. The cycle of homelessness has been investigated in terms of pathways by a number of researchers (e.g. MacKenzie & Chamberlain, 2003; Martijn & Sharpe, 2006). MacKenzie and Chamberlain (2003) outlined

the pathways by which youth and adults can become homeless, as well as the pathways along which interventions could be delivered in assisting individuals to exit homelessness. Family breakdown, domestic violence, and poverty were identified as key causes of homelessness in Australia. Martijn and Sharpe (2006) investigated the pathways by which Australian youth enter homelessness; identifying trauma and psychopathology as key precursors. When homelessness is modelled in terms of pathways, the concept of transitions between life circumstances is often utilised. The focus of Journey Mapping on such transitions is important: the findings of future evaluations of Clemente and Catalyst should be able to be easily synthesised with research into homeless pathways. A noteworthy feature of the planned research into Clemente and Catalyst is that the research will examine not only pathways *into* and *out of* homelessness, but pathways *during* homelessness. That is, the research will examine the life transitions that occur for the homeless students regardless of whether they become more or less engaged, or whether they manage to exit homelessness. The Journey Mapping methodology will be a crucial tool for tracking the pathways travelled by the students during their time in the Clemente and Catalyst programs.

Other factors to be considered

A potential obstacle to the effectiveness of the Clemente and Catalyst programs is that they have been adopted from the original Clemente Course, which was devised by Earl Shorris with the American homeless population in mind. There are significant differences between the American homeless population and the Australian one (Neil & Fopp, 1994). In the United States, one of the prime causes of homelessness is that there is a substantial shortage of affordable housing (Hartman, 1989; Main, 1998; Surber et al., 1988). In contrast, economic factors do not play as important a role in Australian homelessness. Much of the poverty and homelessness in the U.S. is economically driven, while in Australia there are more 'safety nets' (such as publicly funded health insurance, welfare benefits, subsidised housing, social security, etc.) that prevent individuals from becoming impoverished and homeless. So, for an Australian to become homeless, they will often need to experience severe problems or hardships. Thus, it is plausible that the Australian homeless population is significantly more affected by disengagement, psychological disorders, substance abuse problems, medical issues, etc. than is the U.S. homeless population. If this is so, humanities education for homeless people might be less likely to succeed in Australia compared to the U.S. Of course, the Clemente and Catalyst programs in Australia are seen as part of an international effort to empower and reengage homeless people from a wide range of contexts and populations. As such, the programs are delivered in the knowledge that the homeless population of Australia may need additional supports to facilitate reengagement. Nevertheless, the impact of humanities education is still considered to be an important factor in assisting homeless people to reengage.

Conclusion

There is great potential in the planned investigations of the Clemente and Catalyst programs. The programs are sufficiently established within Australia that they warrant a substantive research base. Indeed, not only are the programs innovative, relevant, and in need of research, but they will be examined using methodological approaches that could benefit from further validation. Even if future evaluations of the programs reveal little useful information, it will be valuable to further explore the utility of the Journey Mapping and Theory of Change approaches. It will also be of interest to determine the effectiveness of these approaches when used in conjunction. Theoretically, the approaches seem well suited to one another, but empirical validation is needed. The ultimate goal, of course, is to evaluate Clemente and Catalyst; to build upon the initial research and determine the effectiveness of

the programs for assisting homeless persons to reengage. Importantly, this will lead to a better understanding of the factors that contribute to the effectiveness or otherwise of the programs. With the expansion of Catalyst from Sydney to Brisbane, there is the indication that such programs might be considered in other locations. The future may see Clemente-style programs offered in additional Australian cities, and introduced to other countries. Indeed, there is the need for Clemente and Catalyst to be thoroughly investigated, in order to identify aspects of the programs that yield benefits for the students, and aspects that need to be improved or altered.

Judging by the initial research, there is good reason to believe that future research will continue to demonstrate benefits of Clemente and Catalyst. Indeed, the vision of Shorris has already been realised in the delivery of humanities education programs to marginalised people in six countries across four continents, and now is the time for these programs to be enhanced through the knowledge gained from evaluations. Using Journey Mapping and Theory of Change, the impact of Clemente and Catalyst will be further illuminated. The results of the planned evaluations could also generalise to research on other disadvantaged groups, especially given the flexibility of the Journey Mapping and Theory of Change methodologies. In all, it is hoped that the future will not only bring additional knowledge as to the effectiveness of Clemente and Catalyst; it will also bring increases in knowledge of homelessness, homeless people, and other marginalised groups.

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