



SPU Internal Grant Final Grant Report

2014-15 SERVE Grant

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Homelessness in Seattle: A Christian University Response

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- 1. Summarize the project goals and the activities that took place to meet those goals during the grant period. Note who was involved and if anyone was an SPU student.**

Project Goals

As Christian sociologists we believe that the tools of the sociological method give us “eyes to see” how social systems create, sustain, and perpetuate inequalities that are inconsistent with the gospel message. As a growing social problem homelessness demands a closer look. Seattle Pacific University’s hosting of Tent City 3 (TC3) during the winter of 2015 gave us an opportunity to engage the culture of homelessness using the tools of social science.

Activities Meeting Goals

Coursework

Students taking a variety of coursework were asked to think about and engage issues regarding homelessness and TC3 (e.g., Homelessness in American and Urban Sociology). Several students engaged more directly in the research component of the project by taking our Research Methods course, as well SOC 3320: Homelessness in America, and either SOC 4910: Senior Seminar: Homelessness or SOC 4970: Tent City Research) giving the students a strong theoretical and practical understanding of research and homelessness.

Student Research Experience¹

Interviews: Students completed at least two interviews with TC3 residents.

Field Notes: Students attended the various films, forums, and campus programs related to TC3 in order to record observations from individuals within the SPU and TC3 communities.

Advocacy: Students participated with Homelessness Advocacy Day at the state capital, Seattle City Council meetings, and a rally in Burien.

- 2. What were the major findings?**

We are currently analyzing the findings in three broad ways: the impact of the TC3 research experience on our students’ understandings of inequality, homelessness, and vocation; the SPU community response pre- and post-TC3; and how TC3 residents see their lives within the tent city context.

- 3. How will the results be disseminated and 4. What future scholarly works will be related?**

Academic Publication/Presentation

A proposal for the public sociology journal, *Contexts*, has received a “revise and resubmit” with very positive feedback. We are writing a piece to submit to *Teaching Sociology*. We will be proposing a session on tent cities/homelessness for the American Sociological Association’s 2016 meeting. Beyond that we hope to write an article on the lived experience of those who reside in tent cities.

¹ See Appendix A for a list of the students involved in the Tent City project.



Local Publication/Presentation

We're partnering with *Response Magazine* to write a series of articles for the larger SPU community regarding the ways TC3 impacted our students and community. We are scheduled to participate with Creative Conversations in the fall of 2015 to talk about the project findings.

5. Did you run into any problems/difficulties in completing the project? How were these resolved?

We encountered two general difficulties. First, the implementation of the pre-survey had some glitches, forcing us to resample the SPU community and re-deploy the survey. Second, obtaining interviews with TC3 residents proved difficult as competing projects confused TC3 residents and limited the potential for our data collection.

6. If you had student participation – how did participation in this project further their professional goals or vocational understanding?

The multifaceted project gave students a better understanding of vulnerable populations, research methods, and social change. While there is still a long way to go to combat homelessness in our society, these students are clearly more informed, more empathetic, and energized to “engage the culture and change the world” by working to improve social policies and eradicate negative stereotypes about the homeless.

Student Responses from Research Debrief

“It is easy to see something and forget about it the next minute, however with homelessness once you’re exposed to this injustice, you can’t just forget it. To forget it would mean you’re okay with it, and I don’t think once you learn about it you can ever be okay with this.”

“Before taking these courses [I had a different career plan]... but now I want to work with homeless people.”

“Not only did it impact you as an individual but it impacted everyone you talked to. Now my family knows more about homelessness, my friends, my roommates – they’re all having their eyes opened to this social cause.”

“I was in constant conversation with friends at other universities and they were amazed at the work SPU was doing, and challenged to consider how their own institution is addressing homelessness.”

“I did not have [this knowledge and empathy] before, simply because I did not understand [homelessness].”

“My experience with TC3 and being in this research group has been the most influential thing at SPU.”



Appendix A: Students involved in TC3-related coursework and research

Homelessness in America (SOC 3320, Fall 2014)

1. Amanda Agrellas
2. Sabrina Alvarez
3. Serena Bollinger
4. Brionna Brown
5. Tucker Brumley
6. Sydney Clark
7. Holly Closs
8. Alexa Dias
9. Olivia Dorn
10. Rose Ewing
11. Bailey Fagerlee
12. Amanda Fernandez
13. Natalie Guerin
14. Susan Haldeman
15. Tiffany Hanzo
16. Taylor Hauck
17. Madelyn Hogue
18. Steven Hutchinson
19. Terrell Kelly
20. Catherine Lagoa
21. Caitlin Laybourn
22. Jessica Leung
23. Gennie Livingston
24. Kayla Lozano
25. Ally Miller
26. Maddey Pflaumer
27. Elisa Raney
28. Carl Sallee
29. Sophia Sneep
30. Kalina Thornton
31. Alexis Varela
32. Cassidy Walker
33. Makenna Wallingford

4. Amy Eller
5. Stephanie Ewton
6. Amanda Fernandez
7. Cody Gilman
8. Natalie Guerin
9. Tiffany Hanzo
10. Steven Hutchinson
11. Emma Keys
12. Caleb Khumalo
13. Jessica Leung
14. Kharis Lund
15. Melinda Mayberry
16. Daniel Pies
17. Acacia Protsman
18. Mariel Rieland
19. Bethany Rogers
20. Mackenzie Russell
21. Vanessa Smoke
22. Sophia Sneep
23. Monique Vandenbroucke
24. Christopher Vertefeuille
25. Makenna Wallingford
26. Kecia Weltz
27. Malia White

Seminar on Homelessness/Tent City Research (SOC 4910 & SOC 4970, Winter 2015)

1. Holly Closs
2. Olivia Dorn
3. Rose Ewing
4. Susan Haldeman
5. Madelyn Hogue
6. Steve Hutchinson
7. Kayla Lozano
8. Allyson Miller
9. Paige Ortiz
10. Elisa Raney
11. Sophia Sneep

Urban Sociology (SOC 2620, Winter 2015)

1. Amanda Agrellas
2. Nana Yeboah Appiah-Agyekum
3. Ashton Bosley