

The (Mis)construction of Youth Homelessness: Historical, Social, and Political Dilemmas
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I researched an issue related to youth homeless. The analysis was written for an academic audience and focused on historical, social, and political problems about youth homeless. I wanted to attain a wide variety of resources in order to have a better understanding of the topic. I did so by researching videos, books, articles, archives, and medical journals. I wanted to create a more holistic aspect to the topic and have people think about the social changes that need to occur in order to solve this injustice and not just write a typical research article. To accomplish this, I analyzed archives in the Lilly Library from the 1860s and 1890s, then used U.S Committee records to broaden the time period of youth homelessness research to present day. Additionally, I used articles reporting major movements throughout the 1860s to 2000s in order to have a complete time span of youth homeless in hope of showing improvement. The goal for each report listed by the U.S Committee was to spur action at the federal, state, and local levels, to reserve the assault on vulnerable children and troubled families, and to forge the opportunities and protections to which every child in our nation should be entitled. There remained the understanding that many states and local communities have developed interest and had begun support efforts, but very little federal funding had been available for such improvements. By discovering the problems historically relating to youth homeless, I then continued my research by addressing outreach services and President Obama's recently released 2017 Budget with the intent of ending homelessness. I watched many interviews through *Invisible People* and *Hollywood Homeless* to compare youth homeless issues. I also read Michael Oher's *I Beat the Odds* and Kristina Gibson's *Street Kid: Homeless Youth, Outreach, and Policing New York's Streets* in which I compared the historical, social, and political problems they implemented in their novels. I found that a common theme stated that young people did not seek or choose to be homeless; they were pushed into it, either because their parents explicitly "kicked them out" of home, or because abuse or family conflict forced them to leave. This leaves the youth homeless with no financial or family support. The vast majority of cases presented in the articles and interviews found that children had family conflicts rather than economic circumstances forcing young people onto the streets. I then thought it would be interesting to implement medical journals that documented the mental and physical health abuse youth faced when becoming or dealing with homelessness. Relatively little is known about the epidemiology of mental health problems and substance use but it was mentioned in every article I read. I thought it would be interesting to bring in the element of a scientific study relating youth homelessness stories to the particular ailments they may face. This study measured symptoms of depression, low self-esteem, ADHD, suicidal tendencies, self-injurious behavior, and drug and alcohol use disorder in a sample of homeless youth and young adults living in Hollywood, CA. Then I read a memoir by Janice Erlbaum and the conflict she endured from her family and how it forced her to homelessness and compared that to Michael Oher's story. Throughout my research I compared time periods, causes of homelessness, outreach programs, and today's improvements toward youth homeless. I believe it's important to compare wide ranges of media to understand the general idea of the topic and then progress from there to construct a well-rounded research paper.