GOALS OF THE FIRST STUDIES (2016-2019)

1) Develop a universal/adaptable survey tool as part of a systems approach to understanding PSSH

2) Understand prevalence across regions and based on standard demographics

3) Look for social indicators including economic, cultural and social capital factors

4) Understand individuals' life histories/courses to identify potential points of intervention

5) Identify personal and systemic repercussions of PSSH (i.e. costs): financial, mental and physical health, community diversity, labour force and so on

6) Most importantly, help institutions respond to student housing and other needs

FIRST SURVEY

- Red Deer College (2016)

- Exploratory

- 200 online surveys / 900 Arts students

- Informal Interviews with staff, faculty and students (approximately 25 faculty)

- 42 questions ranging from basic demographics to semantic attachments to poverty, homelessness and hardship

WHAT DID EARLY SURVEYS TELL US?

- 2016 -2019 surveys at 4 Canadian sites

- Red Deer, Saint John, Lakehead (Thunder Bay) and Calgary

- 3.5-6% experience some form of homelessness everyday

- 50-60 % currently facing mental health issues, about. 35% diagnosed and treated*

- 2/3 would leave school if faced with PSSH

TYPOLOGY OF RESILIENCE

- Least common was literal homelessness

- But those folks resorted to sex trade, drug culture, abusive relationships, sleeping in cars

- Most common were hidden forms and unsafe housing/homes, shelter use and interrupted educational streams

- Students would go to great lengths to stay in school

- **They are resilient**, even if many are victimized by housing precarity

THEMATIC FINDINGS FROM EARLY SURVEYS

PRIOR EXPERIENCE WITH HOMELESSNESS

RDC: 31.4 %/>90 % of those were students at that time (70% of this was "hidden homelessness" - 7% had lived completely unsheltered)

UNBSJ: 23.6%/69.7% students at the time (9% unsheltered, 89% hidden or provisional)

UCalg.: 28% (N/A)

HOMELESSNESS AT SITES 2018-2019

RDC: 3.6. and 6.5% (184 Responses/16% response rate)

UNBSJ: 3.5% and 3% (113 Responses/ 18% response rate)

UCalg.: 3.5% and 3.5% (First Pass 154 responses-N/A)

(Highest in youth 18-25) – provisional/hidden

HOUSING WORRY/STRESS IMPACT

- **RDC:** 31% of students said they worried about their housing and this stress was a major concern impacting the performance of 48% of these people. (Respondents offered elaborate explanations of what this stress looks like)

- **UNBSJ:** 38% worry; 32.5% feel stress; 16% impacts school

- **UCalg:** 46% worry; 40% feel stress; 22% interferes with school

A COMMON TOPIC?
WHO TALKS ABOUT IT AND TO WHOM?

RDC: 60% - 44.4% talk at school/among school friends; 14.4% on online networks

UNBSJ: 54% - 39% at/among school networks; 9% online

UCalg: 79% - 70% school/school networks; 9% online

TACTICS AND RESILIENCE - HOW IMPORTANT IS SHELTER? WHERE DO YOU SLEEP?

- **RDC:** 40% would do anything to find shelter. (And this has obvious implications for understanding the criminalization and exploitation of youth.) 72.5% of respondents would couch surf while 14.4% would sleep in a car or RV; 2.6% locker/gym; 5.2% shelter

- **UNBSJ:** 45.7% would do anything; 66.7% couch surf- borrow housing; 17% car/vehicle; 5.6% locker/gym; 5.6% shelter

- **UCalg:** 25% would do anything; 35.9% - extreme lengths; 76% couch surf; 8.7% car/vehicle; 9.7% locker room etc.; shelter 1.94%

WOULD YOU LEAVE SCHOOL (AND GET JOB) BEFORE GOING HOMELESS

RDC: 40% definitely; 24.7% most likely; 16.8% No

UNBSJ: 39.4% definitely; 24.8% most likely; 21.1% No

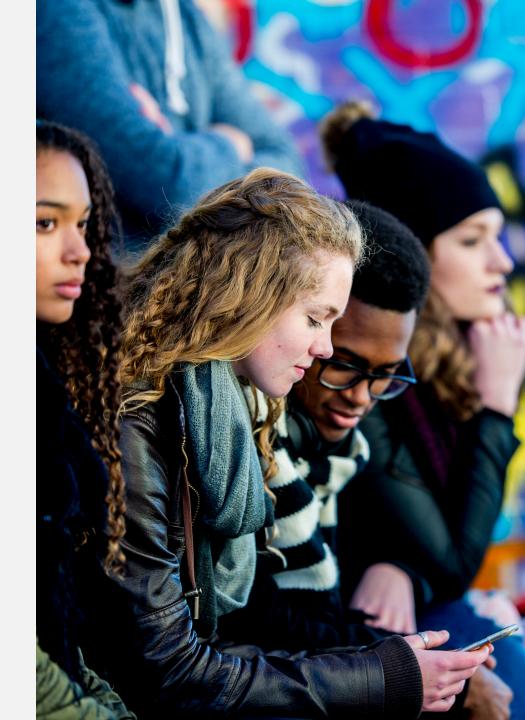**UCalg:** 31% definitely; 34.9% most likely; 16.5% No

WHO WOULD YOU TO TALK TO ABOUT PSSH?

RDC: friend 31.4% ; relative 42%; teacher/instructor 5%; student service/other school resources 3%; therapist/counsellor; 10.4% homeless advocacy group 4.6%; NO ONE 1%

UNBSJ: friend 41.3%; relative 29.4%; Counsellor/therapist 9.2%; advocacy group 9.2%; student service/other school resources 1.4%; Teacher 1.8%; NO ONE 1.8%

UCalg: Relative 43%; friend 38%; student services/other resources 8%; teacher/Instructor 3.88%; homeless advocacy 1.94%; therapist/counsellor 0.97%; NO ONE N/A

Anecdotally: students afraid to admit to housing insecurity **FEAR OF INSTITUTIONAL REPRISAL**

HAVE YOU HAD TO LEAVE SCHOOL BEFORE IN ORDER TO KEEP YOUR HOUSING?

RDC: 4% YES – 11.3 % associate housing loss with general insecurity

UNBSJ: 4.6% YES – 11.1% associate housing loss with general insecurity

UCalg: 2.91% YES – 10.68% associate housing loss with general insecurity

DIAGNOSIS OR RECEIVED TREATMENT FOR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES?

RDC: 51.6%; Ongoing – 22.6%

UNBSJ: 43.2%; Ongoing – 24.8%

UCalg: 30%; Ongoing – 29.7%

STIGMA HIDING HOMELESSNESS

- Across the 3 sites an average of 71% of students are aware of the issue, and that it deserves attention.

- Anecdotally, the idea of being unsheltered or temporarily at risk of homelessness is sometimes seen as hardship, not actual homelessness – related to boon and bust economy, or other insecurities

- Students hide the issue so as not to be compared to others seen by the mainstream as undeserving

THE ROLE OF SCHOOLS

Vast majority (over 70%) of students think that schools ought to play a central role in addressing the issue: students should not have to leave school because of poverty and lack of housing.
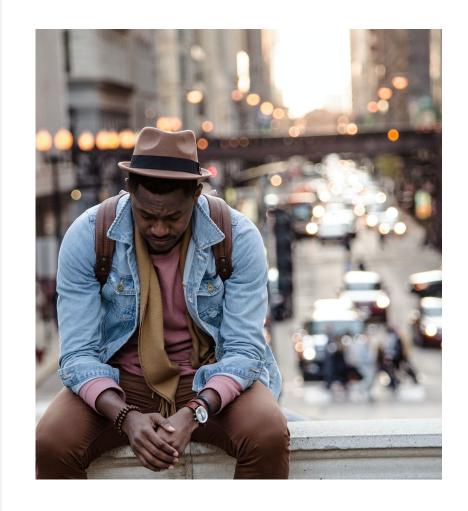
PSS = COMPLEX LIFE-COURSES

Emphasis on k-12 helps us see the impact of homelessness on key life experiences, especially for youth

Helps us identify common factors that correlate with adult homelessness and target interventions/supports

Helps us predict outcomes for students who are able/willing to disclose vulnerabilities and seek support

HOWEVER, Post-Secondary life-courses look differently – demographically and socially complex

STUDENT HOMELESSNESS DESERVES ATTENTION
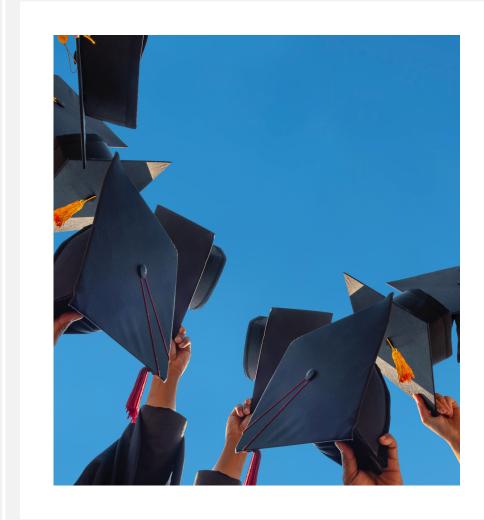
RDC: 78%

UNBSJ: 93%

UCalg: 90%

RESILIENCE

Most important message is that students demonstrate **great resilience**

Despite hardship and setbacks, many **students do succeed**

How can standpoints of students across the range lead to **preventive strategies** and suitable interventions?

SOME IMPLICATIONS - INTERPRETATIONS

Resilience

Educations is a basic right

Life-Courses more complex with age and (other factors)

Stigma is a major obstacle

PSSH is a serious issue- requires attention

Fear associated with reporting and disclosing gets in the way of program design

Friendship networks important for support; MUST develop trust between students , teachers and administrators

Causes of homelessness are important for developing preventive measures

Impact of homelessness in terms of social, economic and cultural capital remains to be understood

PROPOSED NEXT STEPS (2019)

Refine Survey and other research techniques

Build national research network

Secure adequate funding from various sources

Establish secondary research protocols: interviews etc.

Convene a working group of scholars, educators and students to discuss findings and observations

Quickly upstream solutions and find tie-ins with other poverty reduction plans

Publish results and engage media

Develop spatialization/mapping technique for vulnerable students (a visual VAT)