

Housing First

Ending Homelessness, Transforming Systems, and Changing Lives

Deborah Padgett, M.P.H., Benjamin Henwood, Ph.D., and Sam Tsemberis, Ph.D.
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Why is this book worth our time?

HOUSING FIRST



Ending Homelessness,
Transforming Systems,
and Changing Lives

DEBORAH K. PADGETT, BENJAMIN F. HENWOOD, & SAM J. TSEMBERIS

1. We do have homeless people. What shall we (our city; our community; you and I!) do as we think about homeless people in our community?
2. Should we do what works, or what we think should work, or wish would work? This book helps us know what actually works.
3. And, this book is a book about: change management, paradigm shifts, and of course, social justice. In other words, there is something in this book for all of us.

Quotes and excerpts from the book – (the “best of” Randy’s highlights):

The problem with the mainstream model was that for many people the climb was too steep, the journey too long, or the difficulty level too high.

Here are some key quotes from the book.

(Note: The “#s” following each quote indicate the Kindle App for the iMac “location” of the quote in the book.)

1. How often in the vast landscape of health and human services does a small programmatic innovation become the leading approach in less than 20 years, making waves in a multibillion-dollar service sector? 50
2. In 1992, Housing First was developed as a new program by psychologist Dr. Sam Tsemberis, who founded Pathways to Housing, Inc. 62
3. **The problem with the mainstream model was that for many people the climb was too steep, the journey too long, or the difficulty level too high. 77**
4. Pathways to Housing honored the desire for choice by moving homeless men and women directly into their own furnished apartment and enveloping them in support services. 81
5. **A person is considered homeless if he or she “lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and ... has a primary nighttime residency that is: (a) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations ... (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.” 176**
6. As noted by its founder, PHF is a complex clinical and housing intervention that comprises three major components: (1) program philosophy and practice values emphasizing consumer choice; (2) community based, mobile support services; and (3) permanent scatter-site housing. 192



7. **The scatter-site supported housing model met consumers' requirements for normal housing ("We just want a simple ordinary apartment."), tenancy rights ("a place that is mine"), privacy ("I can wake up when I want."), freedom separate from program demands ("I don't want to have to hide my beer under the couch when you come to visit."), off-site rather than on-site services ("I may want to go to treatment but I don't want to be living in treatment."), and affordable rent contributions (30% of income). 243**
8. The challenge in institutional theory is less one of explaining endurance—inertia alone can be powerful—than in understanding how institutions change at all. 310
...three pillars or structures that maintain institutions: (a) regulative—laws and contractual obligations; (b) normative—assumption or ideals governing behavior; and (c) cultural—cognitive—schemas or taken-for-granted scripts underlying behavior. 313
9. There is almost always resistance from individuals and organizations seeking to defend the status quo. 363
10. The growing momentum supporting HF has spawned a propensity for homeless service providers to: (a) invoke HF in a vague way to indicate they are "on board" with what funders expect regardless of how much HF is actually in place at their particular program; and (b) view HF as having an unfair competitive advantage in funding decisions. 380
11. The story of Housing First (HF) must be set within the larger historical context of homelessness, and homelessness exists within a larger context of growing inequality and housing insecurity. 441
12. It would be an understatement to say that African Americans fared less well amidst shrinking economic opportunities. ...The undertow of racism is evident in segregation and discrimination at each juncture, from the initial requirement that public housing developments be segregated to the fierceness of white resistance to integration 453
13. The Wall Street Journal referred to it as a "Nixon-goes-to-China" reversal of policy in which \$4 billion annually was pledged to HUD and the effort to address homelessness (Vitullo–Martin, 2007). Ever the entrepreneur, Mangano used his bully pulpit for homeless advocacy and gave it a Federal imprimatur. 536
14. **Benches were redesigned with armrests or uneven surfaces to prevent reclining; low border walls had fencing or planters along their surfaces to prevent sitting. Use of security fencing, razor wire, and "no trespassing" signs went up as did security cameras and guard services. A social media storm erupted in June 2014 when a luxury apartment building and nearby grocery chain in London installed metal spikes on the surfaces of doorways and entrances to discourage "anti-social behavior." After petitions and online protests, the spikes were removed. 635**
15. Single homeless adults were more likely to be male and had a significantly higher incidence of mental illness and addiction than homeless families or youths. In most large U.S. cities, single adult homeless were primarily African American. These demographic characteristics did not inspire a groundswell of sympathy compared with the response to other disabled and impoverished groups 976
16. The core tenets of Housing First (HF) promulgated by Pathways were a "package deal," 1099
17. The primary outcome of interest—housing stability versus homelessness—showed that individuals assigned to the Housing First group spent approximately 80% of their time stably housed compared with only 30% for participants assigned to TF after two years. 1203
18. In 2010, the U.S. Federal government declared HF the "clear solution" to chronic homelessness in its first ever comprehensive plan to end homelessness (USICH, 2010). 2393
19. **"Housing First isn't just cost-effective. It's more effective, period" 2583**
20. **In Bristol, Tennessee, deep in the heart of Appalachia, the director of a homeless program for veterans states, "We follow the 'housing first' model. We house them first and then you look at all the other services they need to keep them in housing." 3424**
21. "Study after study shows that 80% to 90% of Housing First participants are successfully maintaining their housing. 3533
22. **Given that we now know "housing readiness" is unnecessary, and that supported housing, with the right level of support, works for the overwhelming majority, the obvious next step from a policy and funding angle is to focus resources on what ends homelessness rather than on what prepares people to be housed. 3856**
23. This phenomenon—"seeing is believing"—has been repeated in a number of places in the United States and abroad. 3891
...This list of cities grows by the day. 3918

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by Deborah Padgett, M.P.H.; Benjamin Henwood, Ph.D.; Sam Tsemberis, Ph.D.

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Some of the Key Content and Ideas from the Book

There are homeless people in our midst, all across our land.

People without a home of their own.

And, among these homeless people, there are some who are “chronically homeless – in other words, they will be homeless if the “rest of us” do not do something to help them.

And the best help we can offer is this simple – they need a home **first!**

And, it’s not about “managing” homelessness – it’s about “ending” homelessness.

This book proposes the now-proven approach of “a house – a house **first!**”

- **A short history of how we bring about change** (the authors of this book are fans of Thomas Kuhn and the idea of a “paradigm shift”)
 - First, you say “let’s try this”
 - Next, you measure it’s results (is it actually working?)
 - Then, you replicate it
- **Let’s start with Malcolm Gladwell’s *Million Dollar Murray* (*New Yorker*, 2006)**
 - 10 years; one homeless man; one million dollars!
 - *Gladwell’s article popularized the notion that homelessness is “easier to solve than to manage.” More importantly, the solution that Gladwell highlighted—Housing First—could save public monies and rationalize the distribution of a valued commodity such as housing.*
- **Champions**
 - Foundations (many foundations!) (including especially: the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; the Ford Foundation)
 - Sam J. Tsemberis
 - Ellen Baxter; Roseanne Haggerty
 - Philip Mangano - -- appointed by President George W. Bush United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH)
- **Remember the “partnership”**
 - Foundations; nonprofits (“secular” and “faith-based”); government agencies (at all levels, but **especially the federal level**); businesses...
- **Who are the homeless?**
 - The “short-term” homeless (about 4000 in Dallas)
 - The “chronically homeless” (about 615 in Dallas) – most often
 - Struggling with addiction
 - Suffering from mental illness
 - Started out in poverty
 - Predominantly African-American
 - Younger; 18-24 – or above age 50
 - And, for this book/this approach – predominantly “single”
 - The research is just beginning on this approach for families
 - (And a warning -- about growing inequality; and the future of work)
- **A brief history of “helping” the homeless among us**
 - The Bowery (vagrancy; “sleeping rough”)
 - Public housing
 - All sorts of (temporary) shelters
 - Shared housing (my phrase: a “*dorm room*” arrangement)
 - A true place “*of my own*”

- **The model has been primarily the staircase model**
 - *What did such organizations look like? The bigger ones might have the staircase fully represented: drop-in center, emergency shelter, community residence (an entire building or portion of a building dedicated to congregate living for clients), scattered apartments where clients live two or three per unit, and single occupancy apartments (the ultimate step). Clients might enter at the bottom and work their way up or, if deemed higher functioning at the time of referral, enter at a higher step (only HF gave access to the highest step right away).*
- **From “treatment first” to “housing first” – Housing comes first!**
 - Treatment first - “first they have to be housing ready, and/or housing deserving”
 - Moving from “transitional housing” to “permanent housing” – living *among* us all
 - Moving from “let’s get the homeless out of our sight” to “let’s help them live among us (in “scatter-site housing”)
- **Here are the critical elements of “Housing First” – Remember, Housing is first**
 - #1 – consumer choice
 - #2 – community based, mobile support services
 - #3 – permanent scatter-site housing
 - #4 – harm reduction
- **And, by the way, this approach saves serious money – at least in the United States.**
 - It is the “right thing to do,” (compassion; social justice) -- but it is also the “smart” thing to do
- **The book:**
 - Preface
 - List of Abbreviations
 - Paradigm Shifts and Systems Change: Understanding Housing First and its Impact
 - Homelessness in America: Truths and Consequences
 - Three Lineages of Homeless Services
 - Housing First Gets its Evidence Base and Momentum Builds
 - Housing First From the Inside: Qualitative Research with Clients
 - In Their Own Words: Consumers Share Their Stories
 - Growth of Housing First in the United States: Challenges of Expansion and Fidelity
 - Housing First Internationally: Canada, Europe, and Australia
 - New Beginnings: Transforming Systems as Well as Lives
 - CODA: The Changing Landscape: A Few Updates

Some Lessons and Takeaways

- #1 – To end homelessness, let’s become very open to learn about, pursue, and embrace what actually works
- #2 – To end homelessness, let’s get on the “we can end homelessness” train.
- #3 – To end homelessness, let’s decide we can live with and support “harm reduction”
- #4 – To end homelessness, let’s embrace **“Housing First”**

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