



Research Update

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“An Introduction to the State of Poverty in Canada” by Charles Lammam and Hugh MacIntyre (Fraser Institute, January 2016)

Reviewed by Ryan Dexter

Editor’s note: Please acknowledge that the basic needs poverty measure developed by the Fraser Institute is widely seen as not credible by those doing anti-poverty work. Other measures of low income (such as the Low Income Measure After-Tax) are widely considered more credible.

Charles Lammam and Hugh MacIntyre (2016) aim to complete four tasks. First, the authors distinguish between absolute and relative poverty, and identify different measurements of poverty. These measurements include the low income measure (LIM), the market basket measure (MBM), and the low income cut-off (LICO). However, the authors note that Canada does not have “an official poverty line” (p. 3).

Second, Lammam and MacIntyre (2016) identify poverty and low income trends in Canada. They note that between 1969 and 2009, the rate of poverty decreased from 16.1 percent to 4.8 percent. Further, the percentage of Canadians living in low income households decreased from 15.2 percent in 1996 to 9.7 percent in 2013. However, the authors note that the above mentioned statistics refer to a “snapshot in time and therefore miss important dynamics of low income” (p. 16). For instance, the population that experiences poverty is constantly shifting, as people move in and out of poverty.

However, Lammam and MacIntyre (2016) note that there are portions of the population which experience persistent low income. During five six year periods between 1993 and 2010, “the percentage of Canadians experiencing low income for at least one year over the various six-year periods is decreasing” (p. 18). Between 1993 and 1998, 24.5 percent of Canadians experienced at least one year of low income. On the other hand, between 2005 and 2010 only 17.3 percent of Canadians experienced one year of low income. In addition, for those that experience low income in one year in a six year period, “a large proportion of them are not in that situation the next year”; and the percentage of people experiencing persistent low income has declined from 3.6 percent between 1993 and 1998 to 1.5 percent between 2005 and 2010 (p. 19).

There are, however, at-risk groups for persistent low income. Demographics that have been identified as being at-risk for persistent low income include: people with physical and mental disabilities; single people; persons in single parent families; people with less than a high school education; and recently immigrated visible minorities. Lammam and McIntyre (2016) conclude by pointing towards future research goals, such as the development of a framework for understanding the root causes of persistent poverty. They suggest, to begin,

that persistent poverty results from bad luck, unwise decisions, perverse government programming, or a combination of all of these factors.

In Lamman and MacIntyre's (2016) article, the Basic Needs Poverty Line (BNL), a measure of absolute poverty, calculates the basic needs poverty line for a household of the size of one at \$13,310 for the purchase of core vital needs. However, there is no indication for which part of Canada this measure applies to, given the varying costs of living across the country. As the authors mention, "the amounts displayed... are not

enough to allow households to live 'comfortably'" (p. 4). However, between basic needs and comfort there is the concept of a decent life. A decent life, for many, does not have to be full of comfort and security, but must entail a minimum of comfort and security along with basic needs. The concept of a decent life, although perhaps more difficult to measure statistically, would combine measures of well-being and satisfaction alongside basic needs, giving a more complete account of poverty, and a better policy objective for future planning and research.

Publication source:

<https://www.fraserinstitute.org/sites/default/files/an-introduction-to-the-state-of-poverty-in-canada.pdf>

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:

Ryan Dexter is pursuing an MA in integrated studies at Athabasca University, and hopes to continue his studies at the PhD level, focusing on Social and Political Thought. In his spare time, Ryan serves as Vice-President of altView, an LGBTQ serving organization based out of Strathcona County. He also volunteers as an assistant editor of *the Journal of Integrated Studies*, and is on the editorial board for the journal *the Disestablishmentarian*. Ryan was born in Calgary and grew up in the Edmonton area.

“Educational and Labour Market Outcomes of Childhood Immigrants by Admission Class” by Feng Hou and Aneta Bonikowska (Statistics Canada, April 2016)

Reviewed by Irene Kakai

The main argument of this paper is that immigration admission classes (i.e. the clusters in which immigrants are admitted into the country) differ greatly, and therefore have an impact on the socioeconomic outcomes of the children of immigrants. Hou & Bonikowska (2016), state that these classes are a distinct decision marker in Canadian Immigration policy and vital for improving the economic outcomes of new immigrants. The authors analyze how current education and earnings of childhood immigrants arriving between 1980 and 2000 have been impacted by the admission class that they were assigned when coming into Canada. This paper would be of interest to practitioners in immigration and immigration policy, as well as those involved in Canadian economic development, and immigrants of the admission classes studied (p. 10-12).

Admission class is categorized under nine admission class codes. These are: skilled-worker class; the business class, live-in caregiver class; family class; refugees (government assisted refugees; privately sponsored refugees; refugees landed in Canada; other refugees, including refugee dependants, humanitarian and compassionate cases, and backlog clearance program cases; and others (Hou & Bonikowska, p. 12, 2016).

The authors reveal differences in the levels of educational attainment as well as earnings across the admission class. Characteristics that

are used to explain these differences include demographic data such as age, sex, and visible minority status. Moreover, source country GDP and source country region assess the pre migration factors; while family income and income growth after migration are used to identify the post migration experiences. In addition, mother tongue, years of residence, and age of arrival are also used as measures of the potential differences (Hou & Bonikowska, p. 11, 2016).

The admission class with the highest rates for high school and post-secondary completion and earnings come from children invited through the business and skilled worker classes. On the other hand, the lower end of educational completion and earnings is from childhood immigrants in the live-in caregiver and family class. Indeed, more children of refugees graduated from post-secondary education than those in the live-in caregiver and family class (Hou & Bonikowska, p. 17-35, 2016).

Hou & Bonikowska (2016) reveal some characteristics that seem to explain the overall gaps. The first characteristic is parents' official language and age of arrival. The authors state that children who arrived at preschool age were exposed earlier to the host country language, thereby allowing them to learn English or French more quickly than adolescent children. In addition, education of parents and the country of origin explained gaps to educational

attainment, particularly for government assisted and privately sponsored refugee children. On the other hand, the authors found that parents' post migration income does not influence either the educational attainment or earnings of children (p. 36).

Although the study effectively explores the observable differences, an analysis of the relationship between educational attainment and earnings would be beneficial, since educational attainment often dictates earnings. The authors do not identify the potential of the former as an indicator for the latter.

Furthermore, changes could be made to how the nine codes of admission class were presented. In particular, if each outcome were chronologically ordered from highest to lowest this would provide a more clear view of the socioeconomic gaps that exist across the classes. For instance, the paper mentions the highest and lowest rates for both education and earnings, but seems to

lump all refugees into one category, rather than using the admission class code – this was particularly evident in the explanation of refugee university completion rate.

While the authors discuss the psychosocial implications of immigration—a necessary contribution to the outcomes in question—potential psychosocial variables are not measured in the paper, but are instead left as assumption. For instance, the authors provide explanation for the low rates of economic success of childhood immigrants who are brought in through the live-in care class, which they note is due to the separation of parents from children. To be more effective, however, future research could evaluate the impact of admission and earnings when distinct psychosocial factors are accounted for, such as the psychosocial impact of parent-child separation.

Publication source: <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11f0019m/11f0019m2016377-eng.pdf>

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:



Irene Kakai graduated with a Combined Bachelors Degree in Applied Economics and Psychology. Her current research interests include Global Mental Health, Economics of Health and Economic Development. She currently works with Chrysalis: An Alberta Society for Citizens with Disabilities.

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“Improving Access to Capital for Canada’s First Nation Communities” by Julie Cafley and James McLean (Canada’s Public Policy Forum, February 2016)

Reviewed by Jan Sotocinal

In the past, Canadian provinces prospered through increased capital spending and lowered borrowing interest, which eventually resulted in economic wealth. However, Julie Cafley and James McLean (2016) note that the opposite is true for First Nations communities, which are currently facing barriers to prosperity. Such barriers include “socioeconomic pathologies, governance challenges and institutional barriers and biases” (p. 6).

The authors note that a major challenge is current “archaic” legislation, which discourages First Nations governments from raising “revenue through borrowing and private investment” (Cafley and McLean, 2016, p. 7). Such limitations, the authors note, make it difficult for First Nations governments to afford investments for infrastructure. This, in turn, perpetuates “poverty and underdevelopment in Indigenous jurisdictions” (Cafley and McLean, 2016, p. 7).

To overcome gaps in access to capital, the authors state that certain limitations need to be addressed. These include: underlying community well-being conditions; limited governing powers of First Nations; and legalities surrounding financial management. However, the authors note that issues that

First Nations governments face in access to capital are complex, and there may not necessarily be resolution for these. However, steps have been taken to improve access to capital through the creation of the First Nations Fiscal Management Act, multi-stakeholder partnerships, and Aboriginal financial institutions (Cafley and McLean, 2016).

Despite the headways of the federal governments and other stakeholders, there are still noticeable gaps in bridging the First Nations government with improved access to capital. To this end, the report specifies six broad recommendations: “modernize the federal-First Nations fiscal relationships; improve First Nation governance processes and capabilities; invest in First Nations’ education and training; foster and support regional cooperation to create a more attractive investment climate; strengthen First Nations financial institutions; [and] improve financial literacy” (Cafley and McLean, 2016, p. 7). While the authors note that the above recommendations are not meant to be all-inclusive remedies, but rather are meant to improve relationships and increase collaboration among stakeholders, especially with the First Nations community. The end goal will perhaps empower those who are powerless and provide long-lasting

development (Cafley and McLean, 2016).

The authors have put forth a set of recommendation that may counter challenges and breakdown barriers.

However, most of these recommendations only aim to improve access to financial capital, and therefore increase financial capacity to bring about economic growth and development. The issue then is that the article puts more emphasis on building financial capacity and not on other social capacities within a community.

Moreover, although there are action items listed, the authors do not identify priority items. Thus, without a sense of urgency, these items may end up looking like a “laundry list” of things to do, which creates problems as some items may be overlooked and therefore delay progress.

This article is geared towards policy makers and decision makers in government and non-government organizations that work with First Nations communities. Those interested in economic development may benefit from reading this report as well.

Publication source: http://www.ppforum.ca/sites/default/files/First%20Nation_March%208_1.pdf

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:

Jan Sotocinal is a recent graduate of a Master’s Degree in Rural Planning and Development from the University of Guelph. Having moved back to Edmonton, he is currently charting out his next steps in pursuit of his passions and dreams.

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“The Challenge of Homelessness to Spatial Practices” by Julien P. Doucette-Préville (Social Science Research Network, April 2015)

Reviewed by Sheida Azimi

In this article by Julien Doucette-Préville, Lefebvre’s famous theory of space is used to understand the competing patterns of the use of public space by the general public and homeless people. In this theory, Lefebvre proclaims that space is both physical and mental. This dual conceptualization of space is intertwined and cannot be separated. Lefebvre’s application of this synthesis of concepts deals specifically with what he calls social space. He suggests that space can be contested and created, but it is often used as a tool of domination. For instance, certain actions are deemed legitimate by the civic administration, and can therefore be carried out in the public social space. As such, the social space of the city is political, since it is in part produced by the political administrative structure (Doucette-Préville, 2015, p. 113).

In large part, an administrative/legislative structure such as city council defines the public space and its representation through planning, zoning and bylaws. This is particularly important for homeless individuals since many of their activities are challenged by the representations of space put forth by the city, and are also in conflict with the spatial practices of the majority of public (property owners). Therefore, homeless people will be further marginalized by a system that does not recognize their rights to access and use public space (Doucette-Préville, 2015).

The above means that public space—which should be open to all, and particularly to those without private property—is significantly closed off to the homeless. For example, in Edmonton where existing shelter space cannot accommodate the entire homeless population, the erection of a temporary shelter in public places is prohibited. Without proper shelter to protect them from cold, rain or snow, homeless individuals sleeping outdoors are at risk of serious injury (Doucette-Préville, 2015, p. 114).

The establishment of a tent city by homeless people can be perceived as a strategy of resistance and a mode of reclaiming the merit of their lives as lived out in the public sphere. These communities not only provide the much needed sense of kinship, but also serve to protect the individuals of the group against aggression and violence. However, the establishment of such communities is generally not tolerated and is nearly always explicitly forbidden through various bylaws. Once again, homeless individuals find themselves less free, since their existence is dependent on the acceptance and toleration of their behavior by those in positions of authority (Doucette-Préville, 2015).

This article is relevant to policy makers, councilors and urban planners. It highlights the importance of understanding that due to

homeless people's lack of access to private property of their own, their relationship with public spaces is different from the relationship of general public (Doucette-Préville, 2015, p.114). Failing to consider this in the policy development process leads to non-adaptive and non-reflective policies that are unable to contribute to solving the complex problem of homelessness. Moreover, such factors can result in gentrification and legalistic marginalization of homeless individuals imposed on them based only on their socio-economic status.

This article does a good job of providing different examples of policies and bylaws and explaining their impact on the lives of homeless individuals; and on the general public's perception of these vulnerable individuals. In addition, while Doucette-Préville manages to cite various literature to support his argument, it tends to be repetitive in some instances. Therefore, this article would benefit from more explicit and less repetitive language.

Publication source: http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2612134

ABOUT THE RESEARCH REVIEWER:



Sheida Azimi earned her Bachelor's degree of Economics in Tehran, Iran. Her passion for social equality and social development led her to move to Berlin to pursue her Master's degree in public policy.

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“They Go Up So Fast: 2015 Child Care Fees in Canadian Cities” by David Macdonald and Thea Klinger (Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, December 2015)

Reviewed by Janine Isaac

The 2015 federal election debate included many controversial issues, including national childcare fees. Throughout the party platforms, it was agreed that childcare is increasingly expensive and that there are less spaces available for the growing population. To address this issue, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (CCPA) analysed the high cost of childcare and different subsidy methods throughout centres in Canada.

Macdonald and Klinger (2015) compare fees within three age groups (infant, toddler, and pre-schoolers) in 27 major Canadian cities (p. 5). The authors suggest that lower child-care fees are possible with better federal coordination across centres in Canada and with increasing government subsidies. Consequently, the authors propose that such improved coordination would create more child-care centres in order to increase the number of spaces available and therefore accommodate the growing population (p. 23). This article is best suited to policymakers, stakeholders, and organizations that are relevant to this sector. However, this article can also be of interest to families looking into subsidized child care, as it provides information on different provincial subsidy regimes.

The article obtained national childcare data from administrative data sets or by phone surveys in lieu of absent data sets. Macdonald and Klinger (2015) determined that Toronto had

the highest childcare cost in all three age groups, and that the city had an overall five percent increase from 2014 levels. Throughout the analysis, the authors suggest that cities in Ontario were the most expensive. However, due to the introduction of income-based child care fees in Quebec, there is a more significant 14 percent increase of fees within the province. Additionally, with the incorporation of Consumer Price Index (CPI) data, Macdonald and Klinger suggest that fees (on average) rose five times faster than inflation (p.18).

In terms of analysing different subsidy regimes, the authors indicate two models of subsidization: a predominant provincial contribution and “out-of-pocket” contribution from families (p. 20). Macdonald and Klinger (2015) suggest that with subsidies, centres in Ontario become the least expensive, whereas fees increase in provinces where families pay the difference. However, qualifying families are not guaranteed care due to the low availability of spaces within Ontario centres. The authors indicate that with Quebec’s lack of subsidies, eligible families are guaranteed care at the base fee with no additional paperwork or waiting lists (p. 23).

This article details a broad understanding of child care fees in Canada and the differing provincial subsidy policies. However, the research would benefit from further

investigation on why some cities are more expensive than others, or why some cities that have stark differences in the cost of living can have similar childcare costs. Consequently, the article cannot be considered comprehensive since it does not provide insight on the potential sources of rising childcare fees.

In addition, since the article focuses on the cities with the most expensive fees, additional research with an Alberta specific context would be beneficial. Such research would provide more local insight on the childcare fees from different organizations.

Furthermore, although Macdonald and Klinger provide an evidence-based approach to address

this issue, an analysis on how enhanced federal coordination can be achieved would be beneficial for a more complete understanding of rising fees. In addition, the authors briefly mention how rising fees can affect child care worker wages, but do not further explore the topic. Thus, future research would benefit more specific city analysis, with an additional focus on how childcare worker wages can become affected by increasing fees.

In conclusion, Macdonald and Klinger's analysis of childcare fees in major Canadian cities provides a commendable vehicle into raising awareness and is a good starting foundation for further research into this issue.

Publication source: <https://www.policyalternatives.ca/publications/reports/they-go-so-fast>

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Janine graduated from the University of Alberta in 2015 with a Bachelor of Science in Atmospheric Sciences. She is currently interested in research on social policy issues such as poverty, homelessness, and city housing.

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Through our social policy research and advocacy efforts, we hope to create a healthy, just and inclusive community.

-The Edmonton Social Planning Council

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ABOUT

OUR STAFF: THE EDMONTON SOCIAL PLANNING COUNCIL:

Susan Morrissey , Executive Director	The ESPC is an independent, non-profit, charitable organization. Our Focus is social research, particularly in the areas of low income and poverty.
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THE RESEARCH UPDATE:

The Edmonton Social Planning Council, in collaboration with our volunteers, strive to provide stakeholders and community members with up-to-date reviews on recently published social research reports.

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