

*Canadian Journal of Applied Research*, 1, 1-20 (2010). © Stephanie Frances Bowen. Readers of this article may copy it without the copyright owner's permission, if the author and publisher are acknowledged in the copy and the copy is used for educational, not-for-profit purposes.

**TO END HOMELESSNESS:  
A REVIEW OF MARKETING SOCIAL CHANGE TO RESISTANT AUDIENCES**

Stephanie Frances Bowen  
Royal Roads University

**ABSTRACT:** Homelessness in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, has reached alarming proportions in the past decade, and the city of 400,000 residents now features a homeless population of roughly 1,500 individuals. Due to this high volume and unsuccessful attempts to treat the problem in the past, there is a high incidence of the NIMBY, or “not in my backyard,” phenomenon amongst the city's population. Accordingly, the Coalition to End Homelessness, tasked specifically with dealing with the homelessness issue, must approach the general public in Victoria in a manner that will win their support for upcoming initiatives. This study reviewed social marketing research and initiatives that deal with resistant audiences, stigmatized conditions and social issues, and the general public. Using qualitative coding, a series of themes emerged from the sixteen studies reviewed. These themes were then applied to the specific situation in Victoria, generating a list of seven recommendations for creating, implementing, and monitoring a social marketing campaign aimed at the city's housed population.

**KEYWORDS:** *altering attitudes, community-based social marketing, NIMBY, public perception, homelessness, resistance, segmentation, social marketing, stigma*

### **To End Homelessness: A Review of Marketing Social Change to Resistant Audiences**

While it is challenging to alter public perception, the applied discipline of social marketing is expressly dedicated to influencing attitudes and behaviours of specific target audiences (Harvey, 1999; Kotler, 2006; Kotler & Roberto, 1989). Developing a successful social marketing campaign requires a significant amount of preparation, specifically where a pre-existing negative attitude is evident. Social marketing as a discipline provides numerous examples of campaigns and interventions in which negative attitudes towards stigmatized ideas and behaviors have been combated, though the majority of these examples are in the health and environmental fields (Berg, 2008; Devlin, MacAskill & Stead, 2007; and Brown, 2006). Unfortunately, few studies exist in which social marketing has been used to target negative attitudes towards social problems. The city of Victoria, British Columbia, which faces a significant homelessness issue, represents ideal ground for the exploration and implementation of a social marketing campaign aimed at resistant audiences. By

reviewing pre-existing literature, this study suggests a framework for applying social marketing to the particular case of resistance to Victoria's homelessness initiatives.

There are an estimated 1,500 people on Victoria's streets and, in a city of 400,000 residents, their presence is acutely seen and felt. Roughly, one half of the homeless population is either severely addicted to drugs or mentally ill. Half of that contingent, roughly 350 people, faces the added challenge of both drug dependency and debilitating mental illness (Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness, 2008a). Evidence of these hardships is inescapable on the city's streets: the local community encounters regular pan handling, temporary shelters in underground parking lots and doorways, and abandoned drug paraphernalia on a regular basis. In May 2007, then-mayor Alan Lowe struck a 120-day task force to assess the issue from a variety of perspectives (City of Victoria, 2008). The goals agreed to in the final report centre largely on the dynamics of housing: the task force acknowledged the immense need in Victoria to house those most severely affected by mental illness and

drug addiction, while also developing preventative programs for individuals at risk (Mayor's Task Force, 2007). The Coalition to End Homelessness was established as the secretariat responsible for governing the processes of treatment and prevention.

Though helping and ultimately housing Victoria's homeless is the Coalition's primary target, they have acknowledged the need for a community-owned solution (Greater Victoria Coalition, 2008b). Indeed, one of the most considerable challenges to housing homeless people in the city is securing venues for treatment centres and shelters. Studies have shown that while the majority of area residents facing highly visible homelessness are not ideologically opposed to shelters and treatment centers, residents tend to strongly oppose the placement of these centers within their neighborhoods. This is known in both academic and practitioner literature as the NIMBY, or "not in my backyard" response (Gilbert, 1993; Oakley, 2002; Pendall, 1999; Wynne-Edwards, 2003). The NIMBY response is evident in Victoria: as an example, the city's needle exchange closed their doors in May of 2008, due to public outcry at conditions surrounding the

centre, which had become destitute (Lavoie, 2008; Wallace, 2008). The crucial service has yet to be replaced, though two locations have been rejected based on objections from surrounding residents. This is merely one instance of the fractured nature of service delivery in Victoria. Negative press and visible issues have created negative sentiments in the local community, which garners NIMBYism at best, and criticism and counter-action at worst, from Victoria residents. In order for the Coalition to meet its housing goals it must address the community's concerns and negativity, and create a more positive perception of both the homeless and homelessness initiatives in the city.

To reach the local population, the Coalition has formed a communications working group, comprised of representatives from the Coalition's community partners. This group has worked to assess the situation from a communications perspective, and had begun to compile a communications plan for relating Coalition activity when this study was conducted. The findings presented in this study were meant to aid in this process.

The inclusion of social marketing practices in Victoria's outreach initiatives

could effectively target and influence various segments, including resistant ones, within Victoria's community. However, no social marketing frameworks for targeting homelessness attitudes currently exist. As such, this project aims to review instances of social marketing and relevant research. The intended result of such a review is a series of best practices for the development, implementation and monitoring of outreach initiatives aimed at altering attitudes towards the homeless.

Despite differences in publics and target audiences, the studies reviewed provide valuable insight into the structure, implementation, and audience research of attitude-changing campaigns. By conducting a systematic review of such studies, using criteria developed by the Coalition's communications working group, I hope to lay the groundwork for the Coalition's outreach and demonstrate ways social marketing can be used to influence the perception of social issues outside of the health and environmental fields.

### **Literature Review**

A heavy focus on the motivations, needs, and desires of an intervention's target audience makes social marketing an ideal framework for application to Victoria's homelessness issues. While the

roots of social marketing are in traditional, commercial marketing, social marketing differentiates itself primarily with its "fanatically customer-centered" approach (Andreasen, 1995). This approach is also cited because of the advantage over other methods of inspiring social change (Andreasen, 1995; Fine, 1990; Kotler & Roberto, 1989). It has been suggested that a key element in perpetuation of the NIMBY response to homelessness initiatives is a "lack of planning for understanding of individual neighborhoods' needs" (Gilbert, 1993, p. 7). The social marketing framework, however, is built around researching, acknowledging, and catering to a target audience's position. The attitudes and behaviors of a target demographic are considered the "bottom line" (Andreasen, p. 14) or deciding success factor in any given intervention, and as such the method has enormous potential to impact criticism and NIMBYism.

Evidence of this customer-centric approach exists in various frameworks for planning interventions, as suggested by well-established practitioners of social marketing. Andreasen (1995), for instance, recommends a *4Ps* approach in which the product, price, placement, and promotion

of a program must be carefully considered in relation to a target demographic.

Rigorous testing amongst samples of the population once the *4Ps* are addressed is then crucial, to ensure that each element is effective within the target audience. Kotler (1989) labels this attention to a target audience the fit of the program. Similar in approach to Andreasen, he prescribes a *4Ds* program: defining the problem in a manner that encourages a target audience to recognize it as an issue; designing a solution that will produce results with that segment; delivering the solution in a manner the target audience will recognize; and defending the solution against failure or gradual irrelevancy due to changing attitudes. Each of these approaches identifies the enormous amount of attention that must be paid to a target audience prior to development of any intervention. Additionally, each approach requires careful segmentation of a wider community into specific demographic groups. Only when groups are narrowed by sociodemographic, psychological, and behavioral characteristics can a campaign truly be targeted in an effective manner (Kotler).

Recent methodological work in social marketing indicates a potential shift

in its practices. Research indicates that social marketing campaigns rely almost exclusively on evaluations and experiments as methods of information gathering and program review (Douglas, 2008). These methods tend to focus on quantitative data and are generally conducted at a distance from members of a target audience. Surveys and experiments, for instance, attempt to quantify what are often complex social issues. Furthermore, these research methods tend to distill results and conclusions without input from test subjects. What these methods indicate about social marketing campaigns is that they are regularly conceptualized and planned away from those they wish to influence. This odd contradiction to the framework's audience-centered conceptualization is being challenged by new methods of working with target audiences, including using interactive technology and an ethnographic approach (see Lefebvre, 2007; Brunner, Waugh & Kretschmar, 2007). This partnering approach to conducting research, developing programs, and implementing solutions will be integral to the Coalition's "community-owned" approach to the local population.

Another key component of social marketing is borrowed directly from its commercial origins is the method's dedication to effectiveness, particularly concerning costs (Andreason; Kotler). As such, it is understood that research can take whatever form is cost-effective and adequately assesses the requirements of any given program. This includes reviewing documented cases of previous campaigns (Kotler).

Social marketing faces a stigma in both academic settings and the social services sector that often limits the number of available studies and methodological reviews (Sargeant, 2002). Despite the framework's documented ability to influence behavior and attitudes in an audience-centric manner (Kotler), the majority of intervention evaluations published in academic journals focus on health care (Douglas). However, this is not to imply that critical information cannot be gleaned from other fields for application to a social issue like homelessness. If the Coalition is to plan a successful social marketing campaign and have an impact on the attitudes of city residents, a review of social marketing research and community outreach campaigns will illuminate steps and missteps in planning

and implementing such programs. Additionally, a review of this kind draws attention to the lack of documented social marketing campaigns that seek to reduce stigma and challenge negative perceptions, thereby suggesting further research within the social marketing discipline.

### **Method**

As the purpose of a systematic review is "to reach conclusions that are based on a summary of results from an assembly of studies" (Boruch & Petrosino, 2004, p. 178), the method was deemed appropriate to synthesize research information into tangible themes applicable to homelessness in Victoria. Systematic reviews, however, traditionally deal with quantitative data, whereas this study was primarily concerned with qualitative themes. Accordingly, the method of analysis includes qualitative coding for recurring themes.

Using the steps of systematic review as described by Boruch & Petrosino (2004), studies were found using a combination of electronic and manual searches. The Ebscohost database was selected due to its large size and interdisciplinary nature. Initially only the terms "social marketing" in conjunction with "homelessness" and "homeless" were

used to search for pertinent studies, but this yielded no results. As such, the search criteria were widened. The following terms were searched in conjunction with “social marketing” to yield the sample: “stigma,” “attitude,” “attitude change,” “community,” “public perception,” and “perception.” Additionally, a hand search of *Social Marketing Quarterly* was conducted, as the journal publishes both academic studies and practitioner reports of social marketing initiatives. The abstract of every article in every issue dating back to 2002 was surveyed for relevancy. Relevancy was gauged by adherence to any of themes presented by the key word searches listed above.

This search strategy yielded 25 studies. Criteria for inclusion emerged in documentation from the Coalition’s Communications Working Group (Greater Victoria Coalition, 2008a, 2008b, 2009), and discussions held at their regular meetings. The following themes were used as a filter to determine inclusion: the target audience discussed in the study was the general public; the issue discussed was a social one, particular to an urban area; the aim of the social marketing campaign was changing attitudes or perceptions of a particular audience; the study examined

public perceptions of homelessness, mental illness, or severe drug addiction in reference to social marketing campaigns; or the study dealt with public perceptions of stigmatized social issues or conditions. Each of the aforementioned 25 studies was reviewed and selected if one or more of these themes appeared in either the methodology or discussion of the paper. This filtration yielded the 16 studies discussed in this review.

Each of the core 16 studies were then coded using two qualitative questions: in terms of marketing a stigmatized social issue or reform to a potentially resistant public, what works; and, what doesn’t work? The responses to these questions generated a number of themes pertinent to each study. These themes were reviewed for recurrence in relation to the other studies. If a theme recurred in more than one of the 16 core studies, it was thought pertinent to the review. Seven such themes were highlighted and form the basis of the seven recommendations discussed below.

### **Results of Analysis and Recommendations**

Of the seven recommendations that emerged in this systematic review, there was no notable focus on any stage—development, implementation or review—

of the social marketing process. In total, these recommendations span the natural cycle of any outreach campaign, and as such, are meant to offer the Coalition a holistic evaluation and presentation of important guidelines uncovered throughout the review process.

**The General Public is Never General:  
Know Your Target Audience**

This recommendation represents the practical application of the consumer-centric, research-intensive nature of social marketing. Indeed, of the 16 studies reviewed, 10 were either expressly dedicated to researching public attitudes, or cited audience research as imperative to the social marketing process. For instance, an annual consumer survey sponsored by DDB Needham, Inc., with a sample size of 3,870, tested the correlation between various demographic and psychographic factors, level of community involvement, and effects of social marketing (Dutta-Bergman, 2003). What was discovered was significant in its simplicity: a community or public cannot be perceived or approached at the macro level, as dividing factors will have a considerable influence on each segment's attitude towards intended change. In this instance, researchers found a positive correlation

between age and community involvement, which indicated that older community members often feel more responsible for their immediate communities. As such, an interactive campaign aimed at Victoria's post-retirement community would be more effective than an education-based campaign, as a sense of ownership over housing solutions would engage that sense of responsibility in a way that information about homelessness would not. Identifying the demographic and psychographic segments of a community and targeting their specific attitudes is the foundation upon which the successful social marketing campaign is built.

This is not to imply that simple lines between demographics can be drawn without first surveying each public, as different issues will inspire community-specific responses. For instance, a study of the highly contested perception of obesity and its causes in the United States found that the majority of test subjects with lower body mass indexes (BMI) believed obesity was caused by individual motivations like laziness, as opposed to societal structures or attitudes (Evans, Renaud, & Kamerow, 2006). As a result, this group generally supported policy initiatives like a "fat tax" on unhealthy foods, meant to effectively



force overweight individuals to improve their diets. BMI is not a general demographic divide, and yet in this instance it proved crucial to segmenting an audience and influencing perceptions of a contested social issue. Campaigns targeting Victoria's traditional demographic groups on an issue as significant and complex as housing will not be effective unless each of those segments is further explored for pre-existing notions and attitudes. Surprising divisions may arise.

Once segmented, understanding how each audience assesses the benefits and costs of a program can provide insight into how to inspire maximum adoption of its practices. The Denver Department of Environmental Health (DEH) implemented an education campaign in auto shops to influence compliance with new environmental standards. When focus groups were conducted with operators who did comply with the new regulations, it was discovered that auto shops did so because staff safety increased as a result. This benefit of the program was unexpected by DEH and unrelated to environmental education, but nonetheless provided excellent motivation for non-compliant operators (Berg, 2008). As

previously stated, once carefully segmented and surveyed, surprising and helpful motivations can be uncovered. The Coalition is currently largely unaware of specific attitudes towards homelessness—other than by a small, outspoken percentage of the population—and would do well to explore attitudes before attempting to influence them.

Throughout the reviewed literature some specific frameworks for addressing the attitudes and concerns of the general public recurred: repositioning and social norms marketing emerged as methods of affecting public attitudes and beliefs. Repositioning consists of assessing the general concerns of a target audience and positioning an organization's role in the community to meet those concerns (Kacynski, 2005). In one study, a municipal parks and recreation department determined that teen crime reduction was a central concern to the surrounding community and accordingly developed programs to keep teens occupied and out of trouble. The department then reframed its marketing efforts to include this role. Repositioning ensures that public agencies are not only thought of positively, but are meeting the specific needs of their communities. A repositioning exercise

requires wholesale commitment within an organization; however, real reform to programs must occur to meet the discovered needs of constituents, and only then can they be marketed in a manner that positively influences public perceptions. The Coalition is a young organization with a limited public profile as of yet and hence may not require a repositioning exercise. However, the concept of surveying the broader needs and interests of a community, beyond simply housing the homeless, can both build a positive image and provide effective ways to approach target audiences.

Another suggested framework, social norms marketing, seeks to influence perceived social norms within segments of a community. For instance, in two studies of high-risk drinking practices in American universities (Gomberg, Schneider & DeJong, 2001; Mattern & Neighbors, 2004), researchers surveyed students' perceptions of the drinking habits of their peers. Interventions were then targeted at altering these perceptions and assessing whether this change in social norms had an impact on consumption levels. In the case of Victoria and the homelessness issue, if the perceived social norm is intolerance of homeless shelters and distrust of homeless

individuals, residents may feel little impetus to be accepting. If, however, a campaign were to demonstrate the positive, tolerant actions of actual city residents, social norms might be positively affected and could influence a wider range of individuals.

Regardless of the specific marketing framework employed, approaching a target audience that is resistant to your organization or the change it suggests requires a well-researched and in-depth understanding of demographic and psychographic factors. This research will ensure proper segmentation of audiences, and the development of appropriate messages and programs for each segment. The Coalition needs to understand Victoria's population before attempting to influence residents' attitudes and behaviors regarding homelessness.

### **Empower the Homeless; Respect the Housed**

While improving public perceptions of homelessness initiatives is the ultimate aim of this study, the Coalition ultimately exists to help the homeless. As such, it is imperative that any social marketing campaign developed to reach the public in Victoria be sensitive to how homeless individuals are portrayed. Public-

facing education initiatives about stigmatized issues often inadvertently use pity and fear to generate support for initiatives (Devlin, MacAskill & Stead, 2007; Guttman & Salmon, 2004). Despite the best intentions, these education programs further stigmatize an already marginalized population. Additionally, when stigmatized individuals anticipate discrimination, they generate an inhibiting kind of “self-stigma” (Thorncroft & Stamm, 2006, p. 2), further jeopardizing the empowerment necessary to remove themselves from the cycle of addiction or homelessness.

As such, the Coalition must be careful to ethically review all messages issued to the general public, to ensure that their behavior is not counter-productive to their mandate (Guttman & Salmon). Presenting a worst-case scenario in Victoria is particularly tempting, as the number of homeless individuals continues to mount and public support is low. However, in so doing, the Coalition must be careful to avoid further stigmatization by negatively stereotyping those living a homeless lifestyle (Guttman & Salmon). Kirkwood and Stamm (2006) take this concept of empowerment one step further, questioning the development of public

education programs by experts and communications professionals. In seeking to communicate the experiences of a marginalized community, they enlisted members of that community to tell their own stories. A working group comprised of marginalized individuals and facilitators designed, implemented, and evaluated their own outreach campaign, thereby relating true experiences to the general public while empowering the working group. This model could be particularly effective with members of Victoria’s homeless community who currently reside in shelters and low-income housing: their stories could humanize the issue, affect public perceptions of the homeless, and inspire others struggling with homelessness.

One concern with awareness of stigmatization is reverse-stigma, whereby individuals displaying stigmatizing behaviors are labeled as ignorant without any understanding of their cultural background or concerns (Johnny & Mitchell, 2006). While empowering the homeless population in Victoria should be central to any outreach initiative, it is important to remember that NIMBY is not typically motivated by prejudice or even misinformation, but rather concern for safety and other factors (Gilbert, 1993). If

the Coalition hopes to present the homeless respectfully, it must apply the same standards to resistant publics. If social marketing is indeed “fanatically customer-centered” (Andreasen, 1995), any campaign developed for Victoria’s residents must balance a real need to empower the homeless with respect for the hesitations and concerns of the housed.

### **Offer a Call to Action**

When working to alter the perceptions of a target population it is important to ensure that audiences feel and remain connected to an issue, to ensure their continuing support. One method of maintaining this connection is offering each target audience a role to play in the solution (Smith, 2008; White, 2006). A series of polls and focus groups in the South Okanagan Simikameen, an ecologically diverse and endangered area, revealed that the region’s general public was concerned about protecting the area and its wildlife, but unsure of how to show their support (White). Further, because of this void they felt helpless and disconnected from the issue. Simple calls to action like involvement in the political process, such as telephoning or writing letters to elected officials, appealed to the surveyed public. Offering a call to action

post-implementation allows individuals to feel involved in the solutions to social issues, generating support for initiatives and policy reform. In an overview of marketing policy reform specifically (Smith), it is explained that small activities lead to a critical “tipping point” for success. As such, calls to action can range from the creation of ongoing neighborhood committees, to one-day events like education forums. If one-day events are deemed most budget-appropriate and effective by the Coalition, it is important to remember that an “availability bias” exists in most members of the public: individuals will perceive actions as occurring more regularly if they can easily recall an example (Smith). The option to participate must be offered with semi-regular frequency, as this generates a feeling of connectedness. Even if residents do not participate, awareness of an avenue to do so will generate support for the Coalition’s actions.

The issue of homelessness in Victoria has increased in severity over the last decade, and it is safe to assume that a disconnected feeling of helplessness exists, as initiatives like the needle exchange continue to publicly fail. By engaging the residents of the city on an active level—

offering them a way to participate, as opposed to merely observe—the opposition the Coalition faces may lessen considerably.

### **Educate Your Spokespeople**

Community spokespeople who act as advocates for social initiatives can have a dramatic impact on public perceptions of programs, as they lend credibility and authenticity to both the issue and its solution (Brown, 2006; Dutta-Bergman, 2003). As such, it is extremely important to ensure that any spokesperson endorsed by the Coalition has a full understanding of issues, agency motivations, programs, and monitoring methods. Without such education, negative and contradictory perceptions can easily be perpetuated. For instance, a review of social marketing initiatives for leprosy in developing countries reported a general willingness amongst folk healers to educate their villages and clients about modern remedies (Brown). However, the majority of folk healers surveyed attributed the disease to witchcraft and rarely recommended immediate treatment, hence increasing the associated stigma as well as risk of death and disfigurement.

Standardized education programs for spokespeople will ensure all those

associated with an agency and its programs have a complete understanding of initiatives, making communication with the public more uniform and accurate. In a social marketing approach to detecting mental illness, a number of individuals in the community, including schoolteachers and nurses, volunteered to be “gatekeepers,” and were trained to look for signs of mental illness and distress (Kirkwood & Stamm). By taking the time and resources to educate influential members of a community, any program will be better communicated and have an increased chance at positive impact. Accordingly, the Coalition could compile an educational and informational package including background information about homelessness, mental illness and addiction; a brief history of past initiatives in the city; and a detailed outline of upcoming programs and projects in keeping with the agency’s vision. Such information would ensure that a consistent message is being delivered to Victoria’s population from a variety of credible, established sources, lending weight to the Coalition’s actions.

### **Integrate Your Communities**

Restricting a campaign to information dissemination and education

may limit its potential to reduce stigma against an afflicted community. In the same review of campaigns to reduce the stigma of leprosy (Brown), researchers found that communities in which patients were treated in general health facilities exhibited significantly less prejudice and stigma towards the disease. Indeed, a review of mental health treatment concluded: “The strongest evidence at present for active ingredients to reduce stigma pertains to direct social contact” (Thornicroft, Brohan, Kassam, Lewis Holmes, 2008, p. 5). Additionally, as an incentive, highly participative communities have proved very effective at information dissemination (Dutta-Bergman), meaning a campaign aimed at integrating the homeless and the housed could serve the dual purpose of personal contact and education.

While services strictly for the homeless, such as shelters and soup kitchens, are not easily integrated into communities, the treatment of drug-addicted and mentally ill homeless people can be integrated into other forms of healthcare. This, however, requires a great deal of outreach to health practitioners, who are liable to exhibit similar prejudice as the community at large, and can use

their experiences to ratify harmful stereotypes (Thornicroft et al.). If the Coalition recommends integrated health services, it must be prepared for a potential backlash amongst health practitioners primarily.

Another method for fostering contact between communities is integrated events. In a program initiated by DANLEP, a Danish leprosy organization, trained government health workers in Madhya Pradesh brought together community members, patients, doctors, and healthcare professionals into mixed group camps to talk about their experiences with the disease (Brown). The camps were intended to create an emotional response to the issue as a whole. In a similar vein, Victoria hosted Project Connect in 2008. The day-long event featured a series of workshops and a barbeque lunch for homeless people, and was staffed entirely by community volunteers. While the success of events is difficult to measure and should be considered prior to their organization, integrated one-day events like Project Connect may provide the best method for evoking an emotional response in Victoria residents, and provide that much-needed

contact to help fight the stigmatization of homeless individuals.

### **Evaluate and Update Your Programs**

When attempting to alter perceptions and attitudes it is extremely difficult to establish causality, and yet monitoring and evaluating social marketing campaigns is crucial to maintaining relevancy (Lavak, 2006). As the aforementioned study of attitudes towards obesity found (Evans, 2006), public perceptions of major social issues shift regularly, and as such, programs tailored to those perceptions must also be prepared to shift and adapt. Initial research data of community segments can provide a valuable baseline for assessing how far a program has come in changing attitudes (Gomberg, 2001; White). The importance of monitoring programs means that establishing such a baseline should be the first step the Coalition takes in designing outreach campaigns. Regardless of a qualitative or quantitative method of gathering information, public attitudes, reactions, and suggestions should be gauged at regular intervals. If results after six months or one year do not show an improvement in public perception, the Coalition should be prepared to return to their programs and redesign them.

### **Co-Opt Your Critics**

Any controversial social issue will draw criticism from community members, especially when the proposed solutions like homeless shelters have highly visible effects on residential areas. However, ignoring or attempting to silence those voices of criticism may prove significantly less effective than including them in your outreach process. As Smith points out in his overview of marketing policy reform, “leaders of all persuasions like a microphone. If you give them a role in the reform and share the public voice with them in some way – listening to them and using some of their ideas – you may be able to make them into a reluctant ally” (p. 111). Similar to the earlier discussion of a call to action, allowing critics to participate in the development and implementation of solutions will offer a level of connectedness to the issue. If included in community forums and neighborhood committees, critics may become aware of the complexity of housing and perhaps recognize the immense challenge the Coalition faces.

It should be noted that, if advisory committees include voices of dissent, their comments, concerns and frustrations should be heeded. If social marketing is

indeed primarily customer-focused, then all targeted customers should feel they have a voice and, hence, ownership of the issue.

### **Conclusion**

The Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness has expressly committed itself to a community-owned solution to ending homelessness, and social marketing appears to be an appropriate framework for its outreach campaigns. While a social marketing approach to altering public perceptions and dealing with a resistant audience has not been widely documented, conducting a review of existing studies provides valuable insight into the process.

It is recommended that the Coalition begin with widespread research of Victoria's publics, to assess current attitudes and establish a baseline for future evaluation. This research will help to segment the population. These segments can then be targeted independently, using a variety of approaches that may include knowledge dissemination, integration of health services, interactive events for the homeless and the housed, the educating of community leaders on the current and expected activity of the Coalition, the design and implementation of a campaign

by previously-homeless individuals, or any number of other awareness-raising campaigns.

When assembling and implementing these campaigns, the Coalition should include a call to action such as community involvement in advisory groups and steering committees. This will serve to keep the public connected to the issue, and also provide an arena where critics can voice their opinions and still actively participate in solutions.

Finally, continued evaluation of any program aimed at swaying public opinion is crucial. Segments of the public targeted in campaigns should be surveyed, via quantitative or qualitative methods, at regular intervals. The Coalition must be willing to adjust its initiatives based on these findings, to ensure maximum effectiveness and the continued ability to reach Victoria's publics.

This study was limited in two capacities. Firstly, no studies emerged in which social marketing was expressly used in conjunction with homelessness in an urban setting. A review of such initiatives would likely have yielded more specific recommendations and been more helpful to the Coalition. Further research within the discipline of social marketing could



examine how this framework is applied to social issues outside of health. Second, due to time restrictions, only the EBSCOHost database was searched to produce the original sample. A wider review incorporating both academic and practitioner literature would likely produce more in-depth results.

The path to ending homelessness in Victoria is certain to be a long and arduous one, but by enlisting the support and participation of Victoria's population, the Coalition may hope to ease the burden. A social marketing approach, bearing in mind the themes that came to light in this review, may provide the precise tools necessary to reach that audience.

### References

- Andreasen, A.R. (1995). *Marketing Social Change: Changing Behavior to Promote Health, Social Development, and the Environment*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Berg, R. (2008). Denver Environmental Healthy tries a new approach: Community-based social marketing. *Journal of Environmental Health, 71*, 53-55.
- Boruch, R.F., & Petrosino, A. (2004). Meta-Analysis, Systematic Reviews, and Research Syntheses. In H.P. Hatry, K.E. Newcomer & J.S. Wholey (Eds.) *Handbook of Practical Program Evaluation* (pp. 176-204). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Brown, W. (2006). Can social marketing approaches change community attitudes towards leprosy? *Leprosy Review, 77*, 89-98.
- Brunner, S., Waugh, C., & Kretschmar, H. (2007). Human-centered design, innovation, and social marketing. *Social Marketing Quarterly, 13*, 26-30.
- City of Victoria (2008). Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. Retrieved January 5, 2009, from [http://www.victoria.ca/cityhall/cm\\_mssn\\_hmlssn.shtml](http://www.victoria.ca/cityhall/cm_mssn_hmlssn.shtml)
- Devlin, E., MacAskill, S., & Stead, M. (2007). "We're still the same people": developing a mass media campaign to raise awareness and challenge the stigma of dementia. *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing, 12*, 47-58.
- Douglas, H. (2008). Creating knowledge: A review of research methods in three societal change approaches.

- Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 20, 141-163.
- Dutta-Bergman, M.J. (2003). Demographic and psychographic antecedents of community participation: Applying a social marketing model. *Social Marketing Quarterly*, 9, 17-31.
- Evans, W.D., Renaud, J.M., & Kamerow, D.B. (2006). News media coverage, body mass index, and public attitudes about obesity. *Social Marketing Quarterly*, 12, 19-33.
- Fine, S.H. (1990). *Social Marketing: Promoting the Causes of Public and Nonprofit Agencies*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.
- Fridinger, F., Alfonso, M.L., Hussain, A., Bryant, C., Li, R., Benton-Davis, S., & Grummer-Strawn, L. (2003). A multi-year profile of public beliefs and attitudes regarding breastfeeding practices. *Social Marketing Quarterly*, 9, 32-82.
- Gilbert, D. (1993). Not in my backyard. *Social Work*, 38, 7-8.
- Gomberg, L, Schneider, S.K., & DeJong, W. (2001). Evaluation of a social norms marketing campaign to reduce high-risk drinking at the University of Mississippi. *American Journal of Drug and Alcohol Abuse*, 27, 375-389.
- Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (2008, December 18). *Backgrounder*. Victoria: City of Victoria.
- Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (2008, December). *Draft Communications Plan*. Victoria: City of Victoria.
- Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (2009, January). *10 Guiding Principles*. Victoria: City of Victoria
- Guttman, N. & Salmon, C.T. (2004). Guilt, fear, stigma and knowledge gaps: Ethical issues in public health communication interventions. *Bioethics*, 18, 531-552.
- Harvey, P.D. (1999). *Let every child be wanted: How social marketing is revolutionizing contraceptive use around the world*. Boston: Auburn House.
- Johnny, L. & Mitchell, C. (2006). "Live and let live": An analysis of HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination in international campaign posters. *Journal of Health Communication*, 11, 755-767.

- Kaczynski, A.T., Havitz, M.E., & McCarville, R.E. (2005). Altering perceptions through repositioning: An exercise in framing. *Leisure Studies*, 27, 241-261.
- Kirkwood, A.D., & Stamm, B.H. (2006). A social marketing approach to challenging stigma. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 37, 472-476.
- Kotler, P. (2006). Social marketing and the broadening marketing movement. In A. Singhal, A., & J.W. Dearing (Eds.), *Communication of innovations: A journey with Ev Rogers* (136-144). New Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Kotler, P., & Levy, S.J. (1969). Broadening the concept of marketing. *Journal of Marketing*, 33, 10-15.
- Kotler, P., & Roberto, E.L. (1989). *Social Marketing: Strategies for Changing Public Behavior*. New York: The Free Press.
- Lavack, A. (2006). Using social marketing to de-stigmatize addictions: A review. *Action Research and Theory*, 15, 479-492.
- Lavoie, J. (2008, December 1). Drug activists draw ire from city residents. *Times Colonist Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.timescolonist.com/news/Drug+activists+draw+from+city+residents/1015953/story.html>
- Lefebvre, R.C. (2007). The new technology: The consumer as participant rather than target audience. *Social Marketing Quarterly*, 13, 31-42.
- Mattern, J.L., & Neighbors, C. (2004). Social norms campaigns: Examining the relationship between changes in perceived norms and changes in drinking levels. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol*, 65, 489-492.
- Mayor's Task Force on Breaking the Cycle of Mental Illness, Addictions, and Homelessness (2007). *Executive Summary*. Victoria: City of Victoria.
- Oakley, D. (2002). Housing homeless people: Local mobilization of federal resources to fight NIMBYism. *Journal of Urban Affairs*, 24, 97-116.
- Pendall, R. (1999). Opposition to housing: NIMBY and beyond. *Urban Affairs Review*, 35, 112-136.

- Sargeant, A. (2002). Social and cause-related marketing: The growth of a discipline? *Journal of Nonprofit & Public Sector Marketing*, 9(4), xiii – xv.
- Smith, B. (2008). Marketing policy reform. *Social Marketing Quarterly*, 14, 105-111.
- Thornicroft, G., Brohan, E., Kassam, A., Lewis-Holmes, E. (2008). Reducing stigma and discrimination: Candidate interventions. *International Journal of Mental Health Systems*, 2, 1-7.
- Wallace, B. (2008, November 30). Six months later, needle exchange still overdue. *Times Colonist Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.timescolonist.com/Health/months+later+needle+exchange+still+overdue/1013967/story.html>
- White, B. (2006). South Okanagan-Similkameen conservation program – community-based social marketing project. *Environments*, 34, 55-67.
- Wynne-Edwards, J. (2003). *The Homeless Crisis in Canada: If Not in My Backyard, Then Whose?* National Library of Canada: Ottawa.