

Rethinking Health Inequities: Social and Economic Inclusion and the Case of Lone Mothers

Funded by CIHR

Jo-Ann MacDonald, Presenter

**Donna Murnaghan, PEI Field
Coordinator**

Presented at the PEI HRI 2004 Health Research Forum

Research Team Members

☞ B. Clow(PI) Dal U
ACEWH

☞ S. Johnson Acadia U

☞ A. Burns Mount A U.

☞ M. Conrad UNB

☞ M. Shookner AHPRC
Dal U

☞ K. Wilson, PWHCE

☞ K. Murray(PI) UNB

☞ C. Saulnier ACEWH

☞ S. Solberg MUN

☞ C. Amaratunga U of O

☞ F. Chin-Yee PPHB

☞ D. Murnaghan UPEI
PEI HRI

☞ J. MacDonald UPEI

Background

- ☛ **Since 1998, ACEWH has been at the forefront of developing the Social and Economic Inclusion (SEI) Network**
- ☛ **From 1992-2002 ACEWH worked with 3 reference groups (NB; NFLD; and NS/PEI) to develop synthesis papers and multiple case studies which captured the collective experiences and lessons learned about the value of SEI for policy development in Atlantic Canada**
- ☛ **This collective effort “triggered a fundamental shift in thinking [about child poverty] and stimulated a wave of creative energy around addressing persistent and stubborn social problem’ (Kishchuk, 2002)**

Social and Economic Inclusion



Social and economic exclusion happens when people don't have – and can't get – the education, jobs, decent housing, health care, and other things they need to live comfortably, to participate in society and to feel that they are valued and respected members of their community.

No Trespassing!

Social and economic exclusion can cause whole groups of people to feel that they don't belong and aren't welcome in their own communities.

- Single mothers and their children
- Youth
- Aboriginal people
- Racial and cultural minorities
- Gays and lesbians
- Fragile seniors
- Sick or disabled people
- Unemployed or homeless people
- People in rural or remote places



COSTS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC EXCLUSION



Social and economic exclusion is both a cause and an effect of poverty, poor health, unemployment and crime.

All the impacts of social and economic exclusion are linked. Poverty leads to poor health. Poor health leads to unemployment. Unemployment leads back to more poverty and to increased crime and violence.

All of these create costs that we pay now and that our children will continue to pay.

Background

- ☛ The SEI programme has become an important resource in the region
- ☛ Development has been such that the stage is set for formulation and implementation of inclusionary social policy – natural next phase
- ☛ Workshops hosted in each Atlantic province in 2003 identified research relevant to the well-being of the region as a whole and their province in particular... participants reported the plight of lone mothers – a key public policy area that could benefit from research related to SEI

Problem Statement

- ❧ **Significant and troubling health disparities among vulnerable populations remain, including among poor women raising children on their own. The need is particularly urgent to re-frame and augment research and public policy development so that all regions and populations can benefit from more equitable and responsive public policy. Marginalized groups in poorer regions of the country, such as Atlantic Canada, tend to be hardest hit by illness and by economic and social exclusion. Women are among the most vulnerable groups in this region of the country, and women raising children alone are at the greatest risk of illness and marginalization.**

Primary Research Objective

- ☛ **To develop a research programme that will create a basis for knowledge transfer aimed at creating public policies to decrease the health disparities and vulnerability of lone mothers in Atlantic Canada, and to improve their health.**

Using an Social and Economic Inclusion Framework, the Project

- 1) Provide a portrait of the complex issues facing lone mothers
- 2) Identify the most significant associations b/w lone mothers' health and their SEI status
- 5) Aim to develop a collaborative research network
- 3) Assess the effectiveness and responsiveness of policies and programmes designed for lone mothers
- 4) Evaluate how public policies and programmes could be enhanced and improved to promote even greater SEI

Research Plan – One Year

- ☛ **Develop a fuller elaboration of the theories and analytical strategies that will inform the study**
- ☛ **Synthesize the current state of research on lone mothers in Atlantic Canada, and organize focus groups and conduct interviews.**
- ☛ **An intersectoral scan of current F/P/T and municipal policies and programs designed to assist lone mothers and their families.**
- ☛ **Develop collaborative research network**

Progress to Date

- ☛ **The first research meeting and SEI workshop was held March 31, 2004 and brought together researchers and policy /programming experts**
- ☛ **In a workshop format, the Scottish experience was used as a case study to assist team members to gain insight into the application of SEI in research and policy development**
- ☛ **The next research team meeting will be held in August, 2004**

Knowledge Translation & Dissemination Plan

- ☞ Citizen engagement is central to the conceptual framework of SEI**
- ☞ Steering Committee for the collaborative model of research**
- ☞ Identification of members for a National Advisory Committee**
- ☞ Major research findings will be posted on ACEWH web sites and disseminated through avenues in each province, submitted to newsletters, vetted through social welfare organizations (national & provincial)**
- ☞ Public speaking engagements and targeted presentations to politicians and policy makers**

Summary - Research Significance

- ☛ **Implications for many vulnerable groups in Canada**
- ☛ **As a regional case study, this project will generate important inter-provincial comparisons**
- ☛ **Provide a framework for developing multi-sectoral solutions to the problems facing lone mothers**