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Where are all the services?: An administrators perspective on homeless services in Western Riverside County

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WHERE ARE ALL THE SERVICES?:

AN ADMINISTRATORS PERSPECTIVE ON HOMELESS

SERVICES IN WESTERN RIVERSIDE COUNTY

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A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

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By

Sarah Elizabeth Crane

June 2014

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ABSTRACT

The focus of this study was to better understand the state of homeless services in Western Riverside County's unincorporated areas and cities. Though various services are available to the homeless in these areas, the distance between the appropriate services and some residential parts of the county can be vast. This study sought to obtain an understanding from the administrators of homeless services providers on the deficiencies in services across the county, striving to understand where and what type of increased services are needed.

This study used a qualitative research design. Data were collected from nine homeless service administrators from around Western Riverside County using face-to-face recorded interviews.

This study found that greater services to help those suffering from mental illness or those unable to afford housing were needed. This study also found that increased collaboration between agencies has been working to improve services. It is recommended that homeless agencies continue working together in collaboration to increase the effectiveness of services and to bring the needed funding which will sustain and increase the services required to end homelessness in Western Riverside County.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to all those who have devoted time and energy to ending the homelessness crisis within the United States. I also dedicate this study to those individuals who have struggled with homelessness and found a way to persevere through the help of local government or non-profit homeless programs. May there be an end to homelessness in sight.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

This chapter discusses the current homeless services within Western Riverside County. Included will be a brief overview of Western Riverside County's geography, with an emphasis on where homeless services are plentiful and where services are scarce. At the same time, specific terms and ideas surrounding homelessness will be further explained. This chapter will also introduce the purpose of this study, its potential effect on social work, the research question, and theory behind this study.

Background

Homelessness is an issue the United States has been struggling with for over two centuries. Evidence of this history can be found in early American records dating back to the 1800s which show Boston police were often charged with apprehending "vagrant persons" around the city (Kusmer, 2002, pg. 13). Today the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines a homeless person with four criteria: a person living in a space not meant for human habitation; a person at imminent risk of losing their housing; a family with children who are unstably housed; and those fleeing from domestic violence and lack resources to obtain housing (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2013). Though the terms surrounding homelessness

have evolved from tramp and vagrants to any person at risk of not having housing, the issues surrounding homelessness continue to remain the same.

In California alone there are 130,898 homeless individuals on any given day (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2013). Riverside County, a large inland county in southern California, conducted a homeless count on a single day in January 2013. The count totaled 2,978 homeless individuals, though it is estimated that there are over 10,000 homeless altogether. Of the 2,978 counted, 536 of those reported mental health issues. Given that the results of the count are off by as much as 1/3 of the actual number of homeless, there might be about three times as many homeless mentally ill individuals (Applied Survey Research, 2011 and 2013).

This data makes it clear that homelessness is a big issue in California, especially southern California, a point that has not been overlooked by state and federal politicians. After a Congressional mandate in 2004, Governor Schwarzenegger initiated the Chronic Homeless Initiative, which in turn developed the Ten Year Chronic Homelessness Action Plan (California's Ten Year Chronic Homelessness Action Plan, 2010). Since the creation of this plan, California has implemented best practice programs such as "housing first" and other rapid rehousing methods throughout the state (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2011).

These state-wide initiatives to end homelessness have also been implemented at the local level. For example, the City of Riverside, the county

seat of Riverside County, has benefited greatly from California's state wide initiatives in its attempts to end homelessness. Since 2003 when the City of Riverside adopted the "Riverside Community Broad-Based Homeless Action Plan", Riverside has built the Hulen Campus, a one-stop-shop service hub for the homeless, providing an animal kennel, outreach services, crisis intervention, interim housing, rapid rehousing, homeless prevention resources, coordinated case management, and a building specifically for the homeless chronically mentally ill (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2011). With the variety of services the Hulen Campus provides to the homeless in one location, the time and energy saved by service providers and the homeless themselves from potential travel effort can be redirected elsewhere for other endeavors to further end the homelessness cycle.

Riverside County spans 7,303.13 square miles from LA County to the border of California and Arizona, covering about the same amount of land as the state of New Jersey (city-data.com). Due to the County's expansiveness there exist in it two separate regions, the Inland Empire or Western Portion and the desert portion which begins at the Idyllwild Mountain Range and continues east to the Arizona boarder (Wikipedia).

It is in Western Riverside County that the majority of the county's population exists, dispersed between various housing track communities. In fact, Riverside County is the fastest growing county in the United States, growing over 200% from 1980 to 2002, and reaching a population of 2,189,641

in 2010 (Chen et al, 2010, pg. E166). Western Riverside is made up of 18 incorporated cities; however, the majority of the land exists as unincorporated land (see figure 1). Though the majority of land remains unincorporated the cities surrounding the land continue to grow encroaching on and sometimes completely developing the unincorporated land. While these unincorporated areas continue to grow, the municipal areas expanding into the unincorporated areas neglect to increase the social services, which must come with expanded housing tracks, making it difficult for individuals and families in need to obtain services.

According to the Riverside County Point in Time Count conducted in 2013, there are approximately 571 homeless individuals in the City of Riverside on a given day. When compared to the rest of the county which counted only 1,816 individuals, the City of Riverside might be seen as the hub for homeless activity for the county. One reason for the high numbers in the City of Riverside might be the large number of homeless services available there. Except for the City of Hemet there are no emergency homeless shelters in any other Western Riverside city. Due to this lack in basic shelter services, those homeless individuals from unsupported cities need to travel either to Riverside's Hulen Campus or Hemet's Valley Restart Shelter in order to receive assistance services. For homeless individuals, who are often without cars of their own or fares for public transportation, traveling those great distances can be very difficult.
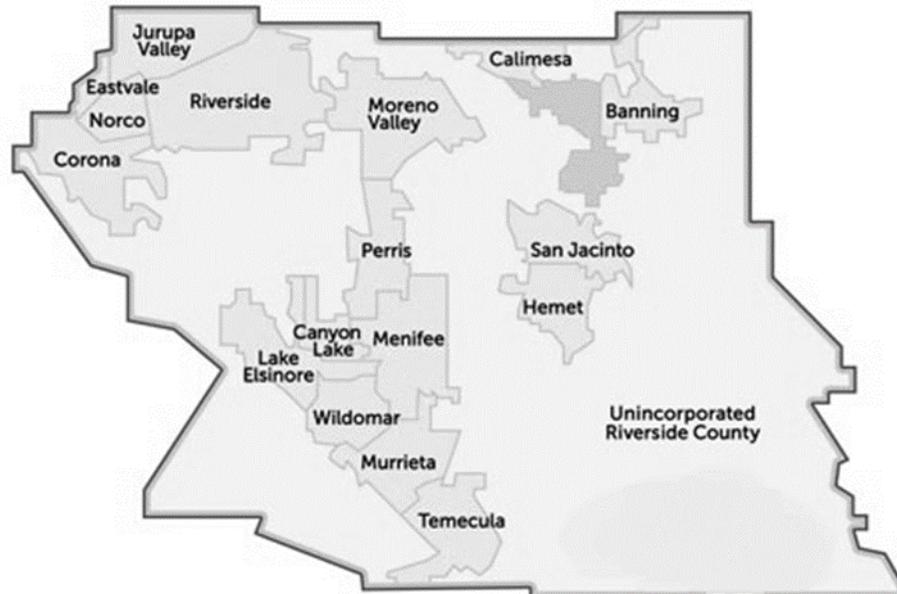
Figure 1. Map of Western Riverside County incorporated and unincorporated areas. (scurrahsroofing.com, 2011)

Given the lack of non-profit or public homeless services throughout Western Riverside County, there has been one sub-group that has extended its services to the needy, faith based organizations. Though these organizations fill the gap left by public or non-profit organizations, these organizations rarely offer the amount and extent of services found at service hubs such as the Hulen campus. At the same time these faith-based organizations may only serve specific populations, turning away the very people who need the services the most, such as ex-felons and those continuously struggling with substance abuse. Another issue among faith based organizations includes mandates that an individual adhere to and

participate in religious programs which might not match with that individual's own beliefs. Instances such as these encourage the migration of the homeless from their place of origin, where an individual may have an exhausted support system, to a place where the individual has no emotional support but a wealth of tangible resources.

Research Question

The focus of this study is to better understand the state of homeless services in Western Riverside County's unincorporated areas and cities. Though various services are available to the homeless in these areas, the distance between the appropriate services and some residential parts of the county can be vast. This study wishes to obtain an understanding from the administrators of homeless service providers as to where the deficiencies in services across the county is, striving to understand where more services are needed and in what type the services are needed.

Obtaining an understanding from homeless service administrators about the state of homeless services in Western Riverside County would be important data for a great many people. As a supplement to Riverside's Homeless Action Plan, this information might help to bring a greater understanding of the services being provided, why there are not more services in growing areas, and the barriers to services for the homeless. This information might also be able to encourage the diversification and multiplication of services provided in rural/suburban settings such as Perris,

Jurupa Valley, and Banning. If this data were given to groups like Riverside County's Continuum of Care, a coalition of providers for the homeless and poor, plans could be made to better organize and situate the homeless services throughout Western Riverside County. A change of this sort might allow services to be provided quickly to those in jeopardy of becoming homeless or already suffering from homelessness.

<div align="center">Theory</div>

In order to better understand the disbursement of homeless services throughout Western Riverside County the data obtained will be examined through the theory of social exclusion with an emphasis on spatial mismatch.

Social exclusion is both a dynamic and systemic idea, implicating that it happens over time by one individual or group to another individual or group. Social exclusion is also systemic implying that the design of social services and society as a whole has aided in creating inequality. For the sake of this study the inequality addressed is the lack of services to the homeless in non-centralized locations (Byrne, 2005).

Along with the theory of social exclusion the idea of spatial mismatch will also be utilized. Though spatial mismatch has previously only been seen in regards to the difficulties of minorities to travel to and from work, the concept can also be applied to other distance related inconsistencies in needed services. For the homeless individual who first experiences homelessness in a

remote area far from services, the ability to obtain those necessary services

and reestablish a housed status is very difficult.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the findings from previous research on various aspects surrounding homelessness. Topics included in this discussion will vary from policy issues, the role of transportation, reasons behind the mobility of the homeless, services provided to the homeless including the concept of the service hub, and general characteristics of non-urban homelessness. A further discussion of the social exclusion theory and spatial mismatch hypothesis in relation to homelessness will also be included.

Social Exclusion/Spatial Mismatch

As previously mentioned in chapter one, the underlying theories used to understand this study are social exclusion and spatial mismatch. As defined by Michael Sheppard in Social Work and Social Exclusion, social exclusion encompasses inequality and disadvantage, expressed through the experience of an "outsider" (Sheppard, 2006, pg. 1). Social exclusion can be manifested in many forms including race, gender, and socio-economic status. However in this regard, homelessness embodies the most extreme form of social exclusion, affecting any demographic found in that situation, and extending to exclude these individuals from the most basic right, to be seen in a public space (Hombs, 2011, pg. 97). Social exclusion can also be seen as a

"reinforcing process" keeping poor people poor and reducing their chances of lifting out of their situation and reentering society (Church, 2000, pg. 197).

Spatial mismatch is a hypothesis that has been used for decades to better understand the inability of minorities to obtain good paying jobs. It has been used to better understand the geographical barriers, such as transportation and location of employment opportunities, and extending to employment that arise from the changing social and economic relations (Preston et al., 1999, pg. 388). The findings of studies on spatial mismatch have found that the distance to jobs is partly responsible for the poor labor market outcomes experienced by ethnic minorities (Selod, 2007, pg. 2402). Though this hypothesis has to date only been used to better understand ethnic localities to jobs, it is easy to convert this idea to encompass people at risk of or in the midst of homelessness to service locations when one takes into account the vast distances between housing locations and essential homeless services.

The marriage of social exclusion and spatial mismatch works well to understand better the plight of the homeless and people at risk of homelessness. Southern California was planned based on the distances achievable via the automobile. This geographical planning means that housing communities can reach far beyond metropolitan centers and services (Jain et al., 2001, pg. 569). However, when a person becomes homeless in one of these distant housing centers, there is a mismatch between where that

individual is and where the services are. This leads to the individual having to leave their home area to a new and unknown area to obtain services, services that associate the individual as an outsider and therefor socially excluded. This exclusion is drilled in even further by the fact that regulations on the use of city space (services only during business hours) shape the power dynamics over the individual (Jocoy, 2010, pg. 1960).

Policy

It is widely known that homelessness exists in every geographical landscape across the United States from urban to rural, however it is the policies of the city or town that shape how it is viewed socially and politically and how the services to the homeless are designed (Wolch et al., 1992, pg. 137). Even when homelessness is known to exist, localities often do not want to acknowledge that there is homelessness in their town. This phenomenon has been called NIMBYism or not in my back yard, signifying that the individuals who work and live in that locality do not want the homeless to be a part of that locality (Jocoy et al., 2010, pg. 1943). To solidify this informal ideology, many localities have implemented anti-homeless ordinances making it illegal to sleep in public spaces and panhandle or beg, while also removing basic necessities such as public bathrooms and even soup kitchens (O'Toole et al., 2007, pg. 447). Some localities believe that providing services to the homeless encourage the homeless to travel to that locality (Jocoy et al., 2010, pg. 1946). Ideas such as this have encouraged some localities to go so far as

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to exclude shelters and social services, forcing homeless people to travel elsewhere for help (Wolch et al., 1993, pg. 161).

It is policy such as those listed above that encourage the idea that homelessness is a strictly urban problem (Cloke et al., 2003, pg. 5). And though homelessness is a very visible problem in urban areas, it is important to create policies that serve those in need in suburban and rural areas. Policy makers in rural and suburban areas need to really understand that homelessness in their districts is "qualitatively different" from urban areas and the discussions and solutions need to contain more contextual understanding of the problem (Rollinson, 2001, pg. 224). Policy makers need to take into account the potential limitations that might face those who seek their service, including distance, time, and location (Jain et al., pg. 573). Along the same lines, policy makers have to take a realistic look at the homeless population in their locality in order to obtain the services for those in need in their locality. According to Continuum of Care literature, in order to receive funds to help those individuals in need in their community, one must first obtain a grasp of the need there is and prove that the community needs more resources to provide for the community (Quigley et al., 2001, pg. 56).

<center>Service Hubs</center>

Service hubs have been around in urban centers since the late 70's and early 80's. These first US service centers are known today as the "skid rows" of major metropolitan areas. According to Rollinson (2001), service hubs are

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conceptualized as "the siting of facilities that can create, and benefit from, an array of agglomeration economies to create a functional and supportive service environment for those in need". Service hubs are meant to provide both long-term and short-term services to minimize the geographical and social dislocation experienced by homeless individuals (Wolch et al., 1992, pg. 138).

Even though service hubs may be beneficial to homeless individuals, they can tax the city in which they reside. These service hubs "can be viewed as unequally bearing the burden and responsibility of providing for the homeless and may attract needy homeless people (Rollinson, 2001, pg. 210). This can be even more evident when a service hub serves a large geographical location and draws the rural homeless from areas that contain no services.

Rural and Suburban Homelessness

Rural and suburban homelessness tends to be quite different from urban homelessness. This population tends to include a larger portion of working poor, whites, and women with children (Rollinson, 2001, pg. 208). Along with the population being more diverse, it also tends to be more hidden from the public. These individuals live in inadequate accommodations and stay temporarily with friends or relatives (Forchuk et al., 2010, pg. 140).

It is also the case that in rural and suburban areas there are very few services meant to help stave off homelessness or services for people who are

newly homeless such as emergency shelters and crisis beds (Forchuk et al., 2010, pg. 145). For this reason people who find themselves homeless leave their homes of origin in search of services. However, these individuals will not refer to themselves as homeless while they remain in their home of origin, it is only once they have moved to obtain services that they start to refer to themselves as homeless (Rollinson, 2001, pg. 224).

Services

As discussed above rural/ suburban homelessness is qualitatively different from urban homelessness (Rollinson, 2001, pg. 224). This difference extends to the ways in which the homeless in these populations react to first becoming homeless. According to Thomas O'Toole (2007, pg. 450) the vast majority of people actively sought out help from social services agencies upon becoming homeless. However, when resources were either hard to get to or non-existent the stress levels of the newly homeless increased dramatically (Forchuk et al., 2010, pg. 140). It is also known that the further an individual is from services the less likely that individual is to use those services (Takahashi et al., 2001, pg. 846).

Services play an important role in the rehabilitation of the homeless and though it may be reasonable to think that the will of an individual may drive that person to success, but it has been found that availability to services may have a stronger influence on coping and adaptation to homelessness than personal characteristics (Wolch et al, 2001, pg. 208). Even still, the homeless

weigh the cost and benefits of participating in services against other uses of time and resources, most of their time being used to obtain assistance for immediate needs (O'Toole et al., 2001, pg. 225). Given the idea that the homeless migrate to the services they believe to be the most valuable, it seems wise that analyzing the daily paths of the homeless can indicate the resources which may best support the coping strategies and exit from homelessness (Wolch et al., 1992, pg. 116).

Transit/ Distance

When the nearest services for a homeless individual are over 20 miles away the only way to get to these resources is by either public transportation (usually the bus) or a car. For those who become newly homeless, often their car becomes their most important material resource. Not only is the homeless individual with a car more able to reach services, but they can also sleep in and store their things in the car, a better alternative to the streets (Rollinson, 2001, pg. 220).

Those without a car find themselves at the mercy of public transportation and potentially excluded from access to services through time poverty (Jain et al., 2001, pg. 576). When an individual takes public transportation they are relinquishing valuable periods of time during their day. Not only does public transportation take time due to the fact of its frequent stops, but often walking time is sacrificed if stations are far from the origin, the destination or both (Lei et al., 2010, pg. 26). Though public transportation has

played an important role in the implementation of welfare reform, displaying

how it can be correctly implemented to bring at risk people closer to services

(Brown, 2008, pg. 1) it has also been shown to be unreliable and unable to

bring people to where they need to go throughout the day (Blumenburg et al.,

2001, pg. 14). Even for those who find their way out of homelessness,

returning back to suburban or rural areas increase the risk of relapse due to

the increase distance required to continue treatments (Forchuk et al., 2010,

pg. 147).

Movement

One of the most prominent aspects of homelessness is the idea that the

homeless are constantly on the move; going from town to town looking for

food, jobs, and places to stay. It is due to the transient nature of homelessness

that it continues to be associated with urban environments, places where

people come and go with the ease of decent and inexpensive public

transportation (Kahn et al., 2007, pg. 2). The transient nature of homelessness

may also explain the perceived lack of rural and suburban homelessness, with

those who are in need moving to places where services are abundant

(Rollinson, 2001, pg. 208 and Cloke et al., 2003, pg. 2).

Once a homeless individual enters a service rich area, that individual's

mobility begins to increase. Service providers require individuals to move from

one service to the next picking up various necessities throughout the day

(Jocoy et al., 2010, pg. 1946). It can be argued that service providers structure

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the mobility of the homeless by the locations of services throughout a municipality (Jocoy et al., 2010, pg. 1960). This structure might be seen as a way to control the homeless via spatial restrictions determined by the daily routines and activities revolving around obtaining services (Takahashi et al., 2001, pg. 847).

While much of the movement of the homeless revolves around obtaining services (Wolch et al., 1993, pg. 160), it needs to be recognized that the homeless also move around during the day to maintain social ties. This movement to maintain social ties implies, as one study found, that the homeless left their origin communities because they lacked the services to assist them when they became homeless (Wolch et al., 1993, pg. 167). It can also be implied that at the origin community, the existing social coping strategies were being increasingly stretched thin, to a point where the individual could no longer solely rely on social support to stave off homelessness and had to move to places where services were provided (Rollinson, 2001, pg. 224).

Support

As stated above, for homeless individuals from rural/ suburban areas, social ties and support networks play a very important role. Individuals may stay with friends or family while trying to obtain permanent housing so as not to have to live on the streets or places uninhabitable for humans. The ability to obtain practical help from local support networks such as friends and family is

seen as a reason to not move (Cloke et al., 2003, pg. 6). For a good portion of the homeless who do move away from their origin communities, they often leave because of the feeling that they had worn out their welcome (Forchuk et al., 2010, pg. 145).

However, all rural homeless have a choice to make. They can either move away to obtain the services that would help them out of homelessness or remain where they are, stranded from all services (Forchuk et al., 2010, pg. 147). Many homeless desire to remain in their origin communities due to the perceived familiarity of living in a setting that can be readily identified (Cloke et al., 2003, pg. 6). It is possible for the decision to leave or stay to disappear from the rural/ suburban homeless experience, if enhanced crisis assistance existed in these communities to assist households to remain in their community rather than having to move in search of social services (Rollinson, 2001, pg. 225).

Conclusion

This chapter discussed the various aspects of homelessness through previous research. Topics included municipal policy revolving around homelessness, special characteristics of the rural/suburban homeless, movement patterns and the effects of distance and transportation on how to homeless obtain services, and the support networks of the homeless in regards to the choice to remain in areas without services or relocated to areas

that did have services. This chapter also discussed the theoretical perspective

being used to understand the research conducted for this study.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

Introduction

This chapter will explain the proposed methods of data collection for this study. It will include explanations of the rationale behind the method, the proposed instrument, rationale behind the questions, the procedure on how the data was collected, and the cautions taken to protect human subjects.

Study Design

The purpose of this study is to explore, from the perspective of homeless service administrators, the status of homeless services in Western Riverside County. The researcher intended to identify the current services provided in Western Riverside County, the origin of the homeless population, the observed extent of the homeless problem, the barriers in the provision of homeless services, and plans or ideas in which to alleviate the homelessness problem.

This study was conducted using qualitative methodology for data collection. Face-to-face interviews with administrators from various homeless service agencies across Western Riverside County were conducted between January 7, 2014 and March 18, 2014. This study design allowed the researcher to obtain an honest opinion on the strengths and limitations of homeless services within this geographical region. Using an interview instead

of a survey allowed the administrators to obtain a more personal and detailed opinion on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of homeless services, bringing to light frustrations or areas of achievement that might not have come forth through a written survey.

This study is limited to administrators' perspectives and does not include the views of the homeless themselves in Western Riverside County. Homeless individuals were not considered for this study due to the lack of information these individuals might have on the community reaction on homeless people and services. This design will limit the study to a more macro view of homeless services, including funding and politics.

<div align="center">Sampling</div>

The sampling this researcher used is a non-probability sampling method, more commonly known as availability sampling. The researcher interviewed 9 administrators of agencies where the homeless are provided shelter or other resources in Western Riverside County. The administrators and agencies were located using the Riverside County Continuum of Care monthly meeting minutes, the primary group of homeless providers in Riverside County, as well as word of mouth networking from already known homeless service administrators or from the interviewed administrators. As the number of agencies that work with the homeless is very small in Western Riverside County, any administrator whose agency worked with the homeless

to provide shelter, transitional living facilities, or services specifically designed to end homelessness was eligible for this study.

Data Collection and Instruments

The researcher used face-to-face interviews using an interview guide containing 15 open ended questions (Appendix A). Questions 1 through 6 inquired about the characteristics of the organization including services provided and where the clients originate. Questions 7 through 15 inquired about the opinion of the administrator on the extent of the homelessness problem in Western Riverside County, including questions related to unmet needs, barriers to services, and suggested changes to services. The questions were arranged so that the administrator could build on the answers previously provided. This however did not manifest in all interviews and may have stifled a few of the administrator interviews. These questions were open ended and participants were encouraged to elaborate on their answers so as to provide the greatest amount of information. The interviewer attempted not to influence the answers of the administrators and utilized the social work skill of furthering to gather as much information as possible.

Procedures

In order to obtain this data, the researcher began contacting organizations to inquire about potential participation in this research three months prior to the start of interviews. These appointments were made during

the hours of 9am to 5pm Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays from January 7 through March 18, 2014. Interviews took place at the administrator's office or a previously agreed upon location. Before the interviews began, administrators were given the informed consent form to read over and sign (Appendix B). Each interview took approximately 15-45 minutes to complete and was administered by the researcher. Upon completion of the interview, the administrator was given a $5 gift certificate to Starbucks as compensation for their time and a debriefing statement, which provided the administrator with information on when and where the data would be available at the end of this study (Appendix C).

Protection of Human Subjects

The researcher took appropriate steps to maintain the protection of all participants in the study. All administrators were interviewed on a voluntary basis. They were presented with an informed consent document, which was signed indicating their consent to be interviewed and audio recorded. Administrators were informed of the purpose of this study and ensured of their anonymity. They were also reminded at the start of the interview that their participation was voluntary, meaning they could decide not to participate, refuse to answer a question, or discontinue the interview at any time. Administrators were also informed of who is conducting the study and why, who the supervising instructor of the study is, IRB approval, and what they would receive in exchange for participation.

The anonymity of the administrators has been maintained throughout the study. Administrators were not identified by name or place of employment, each administrator was given a number, which was used consistently on all documents and the recorded interview. Recorded information was stored in digital files on the recording device and on the researcher's personal computer, where only the researcher had access. Additionally, upon completion of the study all data was deleted. These steps were taken to ensure the protection and anonymity of all participating administrators.

Data Analysis

This study utilized qualitative data analysis. All data gathered from the interviews via digital recordings were transcribed verbatim. A coding method was used to organize the interviews into smaller segments of data. Due to the small size of the interview group, similarities and differences between the data were identified without the aid of a computer program. Also due to the small size of the participant group the data was represented not with percentages but simply out of nine.

Summary

In summary, this chapter presented the method by which the researcher explored why there is a lack of homeless services in Western Riverside County via an administrator's perspective. This study is a qualitative study using a non-probability sampling model known as availability sampling. Face-

to-face interviews were conducted with homeless service administrators from around Western Riverside County using an interview guide. The procedures to address confidentiality and participant protection were addressed in this chapter. Finally the protocol for disseminating the qualitative data obtained through this study was discussed.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will present the findings obtained from the data collection process. The data will be presented in two sections. The first will include the descriptive characteristics of the participants, the homeless agencies they represent, and the locations the clientele originate. The second will describe the themes discovered from the responses of the last four questions on the instrument.

Demographic Characteristics of Participants

The following paragraphs present the demographics of those interviewed. Data was collected from nine homeless service administrators from agencies throughout Western Riverside County. Of the nine administrators, seven were female and two were male. Three administrators were African American, one was Hispanic, and five were Caucasian. Three administrators were in their 30's, five were in their 50's and one was 66. Five out of nine had been at their agencies for 2-4 years, three had been at their agencies for 6-10 years, and one had been at the agency for over 20 years.

The demographic description of the agencies themselves consisted of type of agency, where clientele originate and percentage of clientele that originated from outside the agencies locality. Four out of nine of the agencies

are transitional living facilities, three are emergency shelters, and two are drop in/resource centers. In general participants mentioned that they have had clients originating from locations such as Riverside, Moreno Valley, Perris, Hemet, Corona, Norco, Temecula, Idyllwild, Palm Springs, San Bernardino, LA County, Orange County, and as far away as San Diego and out of state. Percentages of the amount of clientele that originated from that agencies locality varied greatly by region and town. In South Western Riverside County percentages were high, reaching as high as 71%. In Northern Western Riverside County percentages were varied: emergency shelters had 25%, transitional living facilities ranged from 60-10%, and resource center were high ranging from 98-60%.

Findings

After the analysis of the data was complete, it became apparent that the bulk of meaningful data obtained in the interview process was concentrated within the last four questions of the instrument. This section will begin with the raw percentage from questions 9 and 10 and then continue to discuss, the similarities and dissimilarities along with various outlier themes or unexpected answers to the remaining four questions. The questions that will be highlighted are:

12. In your opinion what are the three most critical unmet needs among the homeless in Western Riverside County?

13. For each need stated above, what do you think would be the most efficient way to address them?

14. What barriers prevent people from getting the services and support they need to improve the living situation they are in?

15. What changes might you suggest to service providers that might decrease homelessness in Western Riverside County?

Opinion of Services

Participants were asked to give their opinion on the available services in Western Riverside County. Of the nine participants 3.5 believe that the services are fair or better making statements such as "I think they are great" (Participant 6, personal communication, 2/25/14) or "doing a fair job" (Participant 2, personal communication, 1/31/14). 5.5 of the nine participants found that the available services are "lacking" (Participant 5, personal communication, 2/20/14) or "not adequate" (Participant 2, personal communication, 1/30/14). Participants were then asked their opinion on how large a problem homelessness in in Western Riverside County out of the nine participants seven stated that the problem was significant.

Critical Unmet Needs

Participants were asked to discuss what they saw as the critical unmet needs of the homeless among Western Riverside County. The answers received from this question resulted in four recurrent themes. These themes

were a need for employment, for housing or shelter, for accessible mental/ medical health care, and transportation. The most common of these responses was the need for housing/shelter, appearing in seven out of the nine responses.

<u>Affordable Housing</u>

Though the idea of housing needs was represented in seven out of nine participants, the depiction of how housing can be a barrier for the homeless varied from participant to participant. Participant three summed up the housing sentiment the best by saying: "Housing ends homelessness. Because at the end of the day you could do anything you want for a person who is homeless, but if you cannot put them in housing, then they are still homeless" (Participant 3, personal communication, 2/13/14). Participant one brought up some of the reasons why obtaining affordable housing can be so difficult for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness by stating:

> Typically now what property management companies are wanting is 2.5x more income then the rent. That needs to be how much you bring in a month so you can rent. Because the expense of evictions is so high that they don't want to have to endure that cost by letting somebody rent something for $500 a month when the person only has $700 a month coming in… So finding housing which is able to overcome that barrier is, I think, huge. (Participant 1, personal communication, 1/30/14)

Participant six stated that emergency shelters are needed because:

> People are linked and engaged in services. You have a lot of
> cooperation. You have an incentive to follow the rules. And then when
> you do not have enough space and people are not getting their needs
> met anyways, I think that's when you see a lot more problems because
> they are angry. They don't have any reason to cooperate with us.
> (Participant 6, personal communication, 2/25/14)

Participant seven brought up the idea of affordable housing with a case
management component attached to it:

> Well we don't have enough affordable housing, we do not have enough
> supportive services affordable housing… And I think that a lot of times
> our folks who are coming from the street or from the shelter situation in
> terms of their housing stability. I think having that case management
> component is good. (Participant 7, personal communication, 2/25/14)

Mental/Medical Health Care

The next most common theme to come out of this question was mental
and medical health care. Six out of nine participants stated it is one of the
unmet needs among the homeless. Participant three brought up the toll
physical health problems have on not only the homeless but the general public
by stating:

> Physical [health] is also a huge issue because they use the Emergency
> Rooms a lot, which eats up a whole lot of the money, which goes back

30

to the whole housing first. It is cheaper to house them then to pay for all

of these things. (Participant 3, personal communication, 2/13/14)

Participant six brought up the chronic nature that mental health issues play

with the homeless:

> Because the individuals that I am working with here are chronically
>
> homeless and the mentally ill are a huge part of that population and
>
> they do not just wake up one day and decide they want to come inside.
>
> So it requires a place where they can build relationships and have a
>
> place where they can have that intense engagement over time.
>
> (Participant 6, personal communication, 2/25/14)

Employment

The third most common need mentioned by four out of nine participants

was employment. Participant three saw employability on a spectrum by

stating:

> Some people are not going to be able to work. Some people are not
>
> going to be able to work until they get stable and then there are going to
>
> be people where if they just got a break, got a little training, got the
>
> clothes, and got the transportation, in order to get to the job, the
>
> childcare if they need that. If they got that support then they would be
>
> ok. (Participant 3, personal communication, 2/13/14)

With a completely different perspective on employment participant six saw the

need not only for income but also purpose.

I really wish that instead of Social Security and unemployment [checks], that we had a way to actually give people jobs and then pay them for working. … I mean even the housing first model, you put them in housing, great, if they can't get a job one way or another then they are not going to be self-sufficient… I think that the longer we see people who go without that [jobs] then the more they get convinced that they could never work… I have seen that for a long time, people just getting a check and not working… [Diminishing] their self-esteem as opposed to actually getting a job and learning those skills. (Participant 6, personal communication, 2/25/14)

Transportation

Though the need for better transportation only came up four times over the nine interviews, it was the fourth most consistent need discussed in this section. Participant one stated:

An example of the transportation issue is if someone got a job here and they needed to work on the weekends, they might not be able to get to and from there job on the weekend or in the late evening because public transportation is shuts down. (Participant 1, personal communication, 1/30/14)

Participant three saw the problem as a regional problem stating:

And then we are all a part of this whole inland empire thing, but the transit system, the bus system is horrible so I am giving someone a bus

pass for riverside but they might need to get to Job Corps, they might

need to get to the VA or another service or a job in San Bernardino. So

if I have to get to San Bernardino by bus passes I will need to somehow

get San Bernardino passes also. (Participant 3, personal

communication, 2/13/14)

Participant four stated: "it is difficult for them (the homeless) to get from point A

to point B. Even from here to the VA Loma Linda, it would probably take them

like 4 bus rides to get there and probably a total of 2-3 hours" (Participant 4,

2/14/14). Lastly, participant seven stated "transportation is horrible here… so

many of our folks who are homeless… are so reliant on public transportation. It

should not take someone 5 hours to get to the VA on the bus" (Participant 7,

personal communication, 2/25/14)

Education/Awareness

The topic of education and outreach was brought up by participants

eight and nine during this question. Participant eight mentioned a lack of

awareness in the political atmosphere.

"You would be surprised at how many [politician] are not aware of

things [homelessness programs]. I have had conversations with some

of our leaders and they are just not aware. It's a critical need, to

educate our leaders." (Participant 8, personal communication, 2/28/14)

Participant nine saw the education/awareness issue in a different way, seeing

that the people who would use the services the most were unaware that the

services even existed. "We need them to get them to come in and off the street and to provide them services, more outreach" (Participant 9, personal communication, 3/06/14)

Efficient Ways to Address Unmet Needs

Participants were asked to discuss efficient ways to meet the before mentioned unmet needs among the homeless in Western Riverside County. Though many participants mentioned similar needs in the previous question, the suggestions on how to meet these needs were more varied. The recurrent themes from this question included: collaboration, educating the community, increasing jobs, obtaining more funding and working with the government, transportation, and finding more housing.

Collaboration

The theme of collaboration received the highest amount of recognition with six out of the nine mentioning it as an efficient way to address the various needs of the homeless. Participant two brought up the organized collaboration within Western Riverside County by stating:

Well the way we seem to be doing it is with a collaboration of different agencies. There is a Continuum of Care network that is in existence now in the county. And it is a collaboration of different programs, coming together and sharing ideas. That I think is the most efficient way to do it [end homelessness], that way it's a team approach, a joint

approach to help meet the people's needs. (Participant 2, personal

communication, 1/31/14)

Participant seven mentioned the Continuum of Care (COC) as a resource for

the members of the group and also for the homeless:

And because we are a continuum of care we are kind of in that loop so

we are able then to pass those resources on to our folks, and I think

they have been very helpful and they are very good at that. Getting the

word out. (Participant 7, personal communication, 2/25/14)

Participant five saw the need for government and private sector non-profit

collaboration. "And so, and it all comes down to government and private

sector, faith based communities, working together" (Participant 5, personal

communication, 2/20/14). Participants eight and three both saw collaboration

in the broader sense, an everybody issue as opposed to a government or

church issue. Participant three put it this way:

I think that the community coming together, [would be] the most efficient

way for many of our issues with the homeless. This is a community

issues, it is not a city issues where the city should be doing everything,

it is not a church issue where we just go back to the days where the

churches just fed everybody, and gave them clothing. I think it is an

everybody issue. (Participant 3, personal communication, 2/13/14)

Participant eight likewise stated:

I think that probably for each, for any of that to work, all of those critical

needs to be met, people are going to have to come together to unite on

fixing this. It's a lot, so agencies need to come together with the

leaders, the clergy, you know everybody, job people, everybody needs

to come together. (Participant 8, personal communication, 2/28/14)

Educating the Community

Another way participants felt might work to meet the needs mentioned

in question 12 was education. Participant nine saw the need to educate the

general community about the faults of stereotypes:

I think maybe more awareness, you know taking the stereotype away

from what people think a homeless person is, a bunch of druggies and

alcoholics. There is a lot more to it [homelessness] especially now, you

know, like I said with the economy like it is, there just is no work,

families are suffering. (Participant 9, personal communication, 3/06/14)

Participant four saw education generally as "getting the word out and

educating the community about our needs" (Participant 4, personal

communication, 2/14/14).

Increasing Jobs

When it came to ways to increase jobs participants had a hard time

coming up with solutions. Participant nine was merely able to assert the types

of jobs needed, stating: "I'm not talking a minimum wage job, we are talking

something that would pay well enough that they would be able to survive"

(Participant 9, personal communication, 3/06/14). Participant one saw the answer to jobs with industry: "Maybe if this [highway] were a thoroughfare, or when this becomes a thoroughfare. That would probably allow for more industry and commercial businesses to be around" (Participant 1, personal communication, 3/30/14). Participant eight saw a solution where the business community might get involved with non-profits: "And even if it is just one [person], we can touch each employment place to hire one, take a chance with one and see what happens, that would be good and make a difference" (Participant 8, personal communication, 2/28/14).

Funding

Many participants expressed frustration with government and funding. Participant three ended this section by stating: "Obviously you need to have money to do this" (Participant 3, personal communication, 2/13/14). Participant five expressed frustration with county and city government by stating:

Shelter on the emergency level has to be blessed by the county or city it is located in. Even if I had a pot of money, I still wouldn't be able to just build a shelter, there is zoning and different requirements. And quite frankly it's the not in my back yard syndrome, nobody wants a shelter. (Participant 5, personal communication, 2/20/14)

Participant seven saw the frustration with HUD stating:

First it would be really good if HUD could release the appropriate funding to fund, and I say that in all sincerity because HUD has not

funded any new program in the last two years. (Participant 7, personal

communication, 2/25/14)

Transportation

Participants saw simple solutions for the transportation issues.

Participant one stated: "I know that transportation comes from the county I

don't know where that money comes from but my thought is if you can't run big

busses all night, then run smaller ones" (Participant 1, personal

communication, 1/30/14). Participant seven provided a similar solution:

Looking at where some of the higher need areas are and putting bus

systems there and also having the bus systems run later. The bus

systems they stop at what 830, that's crazy. It is very challenging for

people that do not work traditional schedules. (Participant 7, personal

communication, 2/25/14)

Affordable Housing

Participant nine saw the injustice in the current housing system, stating:

I was just looking, there is a house on the corner here, for rent. And this

is a pretty well established neighborhood, homes are pretty old, [they

were asking] like $1,700 a month $1,800 a month for a little two

bedroom house. I mean who can afford that, that's a mortgage, you

know what I mean. And then you are asking people to come up with first

and last month, that's an issue. (Participant 9, personal communication,

3/06/14)

Participant one saw a solution, seeing affordable housing everywhere:

> We have a the affordable housing, there are apartment complexes in
>
> town that are not full or and some are bored up and empty and I know
>
> that the county of Riverside is working on rehabbing those but to be
>
> able to make those available without the stipulation of the eviction or
>
> maybe the wage requirement. (Participant 1, personal communication,
>
> 1/30/14)

Barriers to Obtaining Services and Support

Participants were asked to discuss the barrios in obtaining services and support among the homeless in Western Riverside County. Again this query elicited a large variety of barriers the most recurrent of these barriers included: mental illness, substance abuse, lack of awareness, criminal history, and stigma.

<u>Substance Abuse</u>

Five of the nine participants mentioned substance abuse as a large issue causing major barriers for people getting help. Participant two mentioned treatment requirements:

> For instance people who have drug addiction problems cannot process
>
> through a program without treatment. Some don't want to get treatment,
>
> so therefore they are ineligible for certain programs… There are those
>
> out there that have just made a choice to be there. They don't want to

stop using drugs or alcohol, they do not want to stop doing whatever

their addictive behavior or activity is. They do not want to stop so they

stay in that condition. (Participant 2, personal communication, 1/31/14)

<u>Mental Health</u>

Five out of the nine also mentioned mental illness or physical health

problems as barriers facing the homeless. Participant two mentioned the

cognitive distortions common among this population:

Mental health problems too. The barriers of their condition because it

makes them think that they do not need treatment or they do not want

to comply with rules and regulations that programs have. (Participant 2,

personal communication, 1/31/14)

Participant six also mentioned the cognitive distortions common among the

homeless:

When you ask them if they have ever had any experience with mental

health they will say "oh no, oh no. I'm not crazy." So for us it is often

mental illness and the way that the mental illness presents itself in that

they do not realize they have a mental illness. The voices are telling

them not to accept services, that it is not safe, all that kind of stuff. The

voices are telling them to sleep outside, it is not safe inside, and so for

us that is a big challenge. (Participant 6, personal communication,

2/25/14)

<u>Lack of Awareness</u>

Five out of nine participants mentioned lack of awareness that resources were even available to them. Participant two stated: "The lack of information number one. Because there are those that do not even know that certain services exist or are even available but they are" (Participant 2, personal communication, 1/31/14). Participant four stated: "Often times it is the lack of awareness. Often people will come here and didn't even know that they could qualify for service or non-service VA benefits" (Participant 4, personal communication, 2/14/14). Participant five stated: "I think a lot of them are kind of unaware of the different services" (Participant 5, personal communication, 2/20/14)/ Participant nine stated:

I think knowledge that we are even here. I know that our program is going on 24 years and still parents don't know about us, until there is a crisis and they are actually looking for programs like this, they don't know about us. (Participant 9, personal communication, 3/06/14)

<u>Criminal History</u>

Four out of the nine participants mentioned criminal history as a barrier for the homeless. Participant two mentioned the lack of support for those with criminal pasts:

Because of the law for certain crimes, you are not eligible for certain services if you are a felon ex-felon. You cannot get food stamps, or

other genera relief. There are restrictions on voting. Finding work is a

problem. (Participant 2, personal communication, 1/31/14)

Participant seven mentioned the difficulties in obtaining housing:

Also in the fact that many of the folks we provide services to have

history of felonies, legal issues, substance abuse and that can be very

challenging to then getting into housing. (Participant 7, personal

communication, 2/25/14)

Participant three mentioned the difficulties of ex-felons and obtaining

employment:

Maybe they have made a lot of mistakes and they have been in prison,

now they have felonies, and that a huge employment barrier. Especially

right now when there are so many people out of work, and people with

degrees, why would somebody hire this person here that has felonies

for drugs and things like that when there is this person who just

graduated from Cal pony Pomona and this is less of a risk. (Participant

3, personal communication, 2/13/14)

<u>Stigma</u>

Three out of the nine participants mentioned stigma, stereotypes and

hopelessness as barriers that prevents the homeless from receiving services.

Participant three mentioned the idea of learned hopelessness:

So there is a decent amount of the embarrassment of being homeless. I

don't want to call my kids, I don't want to be a burden on them. So

support is a big thing, especially for encouragement and hope there is

the learn helplessness and the loss of hope, and learn failure. And all

those terms out there that you see on a regular basis, and the fear of

failure. (Participant 3, personal communication, 2/13/14)

Participant four mentioned that stigma in the community around being

homeless:

Some of the barriers that they receive is sometimes that stigma, the

community often times does not want to give that opportunity. They see

a homeless individual and they kind of shun them and a lot of times

they need to just not judge, get to know where they are coming from,

and what their needs are. (Participant 4, personal communication,

2/14/14)

Participant nine mentioned the fear associated with going and asking for help

from complete strangers:

So they are just afraid, to take the steps to walk into a program like this

is scary. You are talking about kids that have been abused, mentally,

physically, emotionally by the people that are supposed to care and

love them the most. And then you ask for them to come into a program

with a bunch adults and stuff that they don't know. (Participant 9,

personal communication, 3/06/14)

Suggestions for Service Providers

When participants were asked to provide suggestions for service providers on how to better serve the homeless in Western Riverside County each participant provided the most individualized and abstract answers of the previous questions. Of the responses there arose five themes which included: data collection; federal funding; education; collaboration; employment.

Data Collection

Two out of nine participants mentioned the data collection process of the Western Riverside County Continuum of Care and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) program. Participant one stated:

The need for a centralized intake and a universal assessment… And so all of the shelters and agencies that provide both shelter and transitional housing, all of us have to intake and enter into the county data called HMIS homeless management information system every single client that is here and all the raw data. Then they do with it whatever it is that they do. But they also know how many beds, how many beds are filled, how many beds aren't, but it isn't there, they are not the centralized place. And so they do not have any say so over that but that component is now available so when the centralized thing happens there should be a way to snap shot that through. (Participant 1, personal communication, 1/30/14)

Participant two mentioned the good job Riverside County is already doing with data collection:

> They have changed quite a bit already, as in the data processing, the information sharing and approve the data collection the homeless management information system HMIS, as brought a lot of firmness and has solidly brought the data together. And made it available for a more accurate number of people that are homeless and a more comprehensive way of getting that information and reporting that information. (Participant 2, personal communication, 1/31/14)

Funding

Four out of nine participants mentioned that the flow of funding might be improved within Riverside County. Participant one mentioned the requirements from the Federal Government controlling funding by stating:

> But part of the firecracker is the federal government saying that you have to have this if you want HUD money coming into your county. That you need to show us what it is that you are doing about these issues. (Participant 9, personal communication, 3/06/14)

Participant two simply stated "Everything hinges on funding" (Participant 2, personal communication, 1/31/14). "Being able to present data more accurately has caused our grants to increase and sustain those grants year by year" (Participant 2, personal communication, 1/31/14). Participant three mentioned the competitive aspect of obtaining funding in Riverside County:

The problem is that we are all fighting for the same money so it is all

about me [my agency] looking better than you [your agency] or being

better then you, which sometimes can be good, but can also be toxic

and can divide us. (Participant 3, personal communication, 2/13/14)

Education

Three out of nine participants mentioned the need for more community

education. Participant two mentioned the need for education among the non-

homeless community members:

Maybe more advertisement. Maybe more people can come to learn of

the COC or other services out there. We can always have people

communicating more to the world this is what we are doing and maybe

that leads to more interest and more support. Every year we have the

Riverside Chamber of Commerce and Riverside business leaders come

and tour the facilities and we give them information on what we do and

how they can help. This is always an eye opening thing for them

because they did not realize that we do that. (Participant 2, personal

communication, 1/31/14)

Collaboration

Four out of nine participants mentioned the need for more collaboration

in Western Riverside County and six out of nine participants mentioned the

Continuum of Care, the current homeless program collaboration in Western

Riverside County. Participant three discussed the ongoing and continually

changing nature of collaborations that sometimes pushed against what some

organizations want to do by stating:

> I think sometimes things [policy] get stale and people think that's how it
>
> has always been. I don't like to live by that; everything is a living
>
> document, everything should always be changing, always be learning,
>
> always be growing, and have the ability to look at your mistakes and
>
> faults and to move forward. I think some people take those [stale ideas]
>
> into their organizations and they just cannot move beyond that. "This is
>
> how we do it and they cannot move beyond that." (Participant 3,
>
> personal communication, 2/13/14)

Participant seven stated that she likes the way collaboration has been moving:

> I like that everyone is working together and collaborating more with
>
> each other. I like that fact that I feel like I have more of a sense that if I
>
> can't provide the service that I can then send them to someone.
>
> (Participant 7, personal communication, 2/15/14)
>
> Participant eight spoke of the collective nature of the solution. "I mean I

think that is what is going too really help we just cannot be individual in this it is

something that is going to have to be done collectively" (Participant 8, personal

communication, 2/28/14). Participant nine brought up the need for the whole

community to be involved:

> First of all we need to address that it is not just a Western Riverside
>
> County problem, it's a problem overall for the United States. There is a

problem and we need to look at it and see that there is an issue there. I

think that we do a lot of talking, I think that sometimes we need to stop

talking and just start doing. And then there are a lot of people that are

saying they want to help, so get out and vote. Go get your ballots and

help programs that out trying to help the homeless. I don't know, it is a

big problem and I think that it is a problem that we need to all do

together, as a country, as a community, I think that everybody just

needs to work together, that would be ideal. (Participant 9, personal

communication, 3/06/14)

Summary

This chapter presented the data collected from the nine administrator

interviews. Demographic data was presented providing context for the results.

Out of the 15 questions the last four presented the greatest amount of data

pertaining to the research question. The four questions, numbers 12-15, were

thus presented in detail and broken down more fully. The predominant themes

were made clear through quoted excerpts from the administrator interviews.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSION

Introduction

With the hypothesis of this study being to better understand where and why there is a lack of homeless services in Western Riverside County, the data have provided informative results. This chapter will discuss the results of this study, identifying the key findings in the light of both micro and macro practice, the recommendations for social workers based on this study's findings, and the limitations that this study faced.

Presentation of Findings

When asked about the problems and solutions facing Western Riverside County, three out of the nine participants mentioned that all the problems and solutions become intertwined. One administrator equated it to spaghetti, all mashed together, making it difficult to see where one problem or solution started and the other stopped. Throughout the interview process, the participants continuously touched on nine different themes relating to problems with and solutions for homelessness in Western Riverside County. These themes included: employment, affordable housing, mental health services, drug and alcohol problems, transportation, history of convictions, funding, collaborations and education. In many ways these findings mirrored the previous research conducted about homeless populations in general, but this

study especially shined light on the specific areas in which Western Riverside County might specifically benefit.

To better understand these themes, they can be divided into two different categories: micro and macro. First, the micro themes that were mentioned during the interviews included: history of incarcerations, mental health, and drugs and alcohol use. The Macro issues included affordable housing, employment, transportation, collaboration, funding, and education. However, as stated above, all of these issues are mixed together and all interact and affect every other part. The following sections will attempt to discuss the micro and macro themes separately.

<u>Micro Themes</u>

As discussed above several of the themes mentioned by the participants during the interviews involved micro issues. This section will attempt to further understand these themes and the impact they have on the homeless situation in Western Riverside County.

The first theme that developed within the participant interviews was better and more extensive mental health services throughout Western Riverside County. Many of the participants felt that a great number of the chronically homeless individuals throughout this county suffer from mental health issues and are not receiving adequate services. Participants also stated that these individuals tend to tax the local social service systems, coming and going, obtaining treatment and then disappearing for various lengths of time.

Participants also mentioned the difficulties mental health issues present for a homeless individual, having to put treatment and medication aside for more basic needs, such as food and shelter. These findings are consistent with findings found at the National Coalition for the homeless and research conducted by Folsom et al., which indicated that individuals with mental illness have high rates of homeless recidivism and are more likely to use emergency mental health facilities such as hospitals instead of out-patient services. (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009 and Folsom et al., 2005).

The second theme in this micro section was the problems surrounding drug and alcohol abuse among the homeless. According to participants many homeless services in Western Riverside County will not even consider providing services to an individual using drugs without some willingness to undergo treatment. From the perspective of the homeless administrators, these individuals currently using are not interested in stopping, and therefore are not provided services. Participants in this study believed that there needed to be an increase in supportive services for those drug addicted homeless individuals. Participants believed that the housing first model in conjunction with supportive services would be greatly beneficial for all those involved in the homeless epidemic. These findings are consistent with Padgett (2006) where she also found that when homeless individuals are provided services using a housing first model, these individuals were more likely to recover and did not increase drug use.

Third and lastly, the participants in this study reported that more and more the issue of history of incarceration was providing problems for those homeless individuals attempting to escape the grasps of homelessness. There are a multitude of variations on how incarceration affects homeless individuals and those at risk of homelessness. For one, this study found that those with a criminal history have a diminished chance of being accepted into housing programs. Many of the housing programs in Western Riverside County screen applicants to ensure that those they let into their communities will maintain a safe environment. In these situations, if an individual has a criminal history, they may be declined for the program merely based on that history. This finding is consistent with Malone (2009) who found that criminal history was not a good indicator that an individual would disturb or corrupt a housing opportunity if accepted. The second place participants found that criminal history affected those at risk of homelessness and the homeless was in finding employment. It is widely known that employed ex-offenders commit fewer crimes and that those who are attempting to reenter the community wish to obtain employment. This finding is supported by Swanson (2012) who found that unless an individual appears willing to work hard in changing the direction of their life, the prospect of an employer hiring those with a criminal history is bleak.

Macro Themes

As discussed above, the results of the participant data found six macro themes mentioned by a majority of the participants: employment, affordable housing, transportation, collaboration, education and funding. The following section will discuss these themes further.

First, many of the participants mentioned unemployment as one of the greatest causes of homelessness in Western Riverside County over the last five years. Since the Great Recession and the massive loss of low and mid-level jobs in the area, finding employment has been a great struggle for homeless and housed individuals alike. This struggle is exacerbated by lack of adequate public transportation and the mismatch of where people live and where employment opportunities exist, which is consistent with the findings from Preston et al. (1999) and Long et al. (2007). This lack of jobs is especially difficult for those with low skills, minimal employment history, mental illness, and or histories of felonies. As one participant stated: "why hire this convicted, mentally ill person when there is a perfectly healthy young graduate from the local community college." Yet another participant offered the idea of having places of employment team up with agencies to develop managed job training, taking a chance on these more risky individuals.

Second, the idea of affordable housing was discussed by many of the participants. These social service administrators see the need for affordable housing and the potential answers for it everywhere. In many cities and towns

in Western Riverside County there are large empty buildings just sitting there serving no use, however at the same time emergency shelters and transitional living facilities are filled with people working hard but still unable to make enough to take care of their needs, pay rent, and cover utilities. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, in this region of California (2013) there are less than 21 rental units per 100 extremely low income renter household. In the eyes of the participants, additional barriers also hindered the ability for these individuals to obtain housing including evictions, poor credit, and other legal issues. This finding is consistent with findings from Desmond (2012) who found that history of eviction is a downward spiral, which can lead individuals and families into homelessness.

Third, the transportation system within Western Riverside County was brought up by many of the participants to be a constant area of frustration. Because of the lack of resources associated with homelessness, one of the main forms of transportation for the homeless and those at risk of homelessness is the public bus system. Participants mentioned the unreliability of this form of transportation, citing the large amounts of time it takes for an individual to get from one place to another relative to how long it would take a similar individual in a car. This finding was consistent with Jain et al. (2001) and Lei et al. (2010), who found that public transportation adds another barrier for poor individuals in the shape of time poverty, taking time away from other important activities that might aid in the escape from poverty

or homelessness. Participants also mentioned the incongruity between the times when the local public transportation runs and the times when many people earning low wages might be commuting to and from work. This finding is consistent with findings by Blumenburg et al. (2001) who found that the transportation system was not consistent with bringing individuals to and from places where jobs are and where the people who need those jobs live. It was in this area of transportation that the participants were able to come up with many problems but very few solutions. This might be because the way transportation is managed in this area is so remote from the people who actually use it, that even the administrators of social service agencies do not know how the problems might be fixed.

Fourth, the concept of collaboration was mentioned at least once in each of the participant interviews. When participants mentioned the collaboration that was already going on in Western Riverside County, the majority discussed the Riverside Continuum of Care (COC). Participants found that working together has started to help decrease the homelessness problem in the region. One specific place participants found collaboration to be very helpful was in the creation of a centralized data portal in the form of the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). This system has allowed service providers to see when beds are available, making the housing of individuals a little less difficult. This finding is consistent with those found in the California Ten Year Chronic Homelessness Action Plan (2011) and Moulton

(2013), where it was found that the collaboration of social service agencies has helped to decrease the rates of homelessness nationwide.

The fifth theme that was brought up by many of the participants is tied hand in hand with the COC, funding. Many of the participants feel that with more funding, they would be more capable of providing services to more people and really implementing the housing first approach. Participants mentioned that this region had been passed over in the past few years by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). They are hoping that this year all the changes that have been made, the firm groundwork of the COC, and implementation of HMIS will encourage more funding to come into the region. This finding is consistent with findings from Moulton (2013) who found that increasing the funding to social services agencies decreases the amount of individuals suffering from chronic homelessness.

The sixth and final macro concept that was brought up multiple times by participants was the idea that the community needs to be better educated about the services that are available to help them in times of need and that are working hard to decrease the homeless problem in Western Riverside County. This theme was described a couple of different ways by the various participants. The first was to educate the policy makers and city officials of what it is that happens at the homeless service agencies, so that they might better understand what is going on there. The second part of this theme was getting the information out to the community, so that they might know where to

go if ever they or someone they know is at risk of homelessness. Participants mentioned initiatives that are already in place that are attempting to resolve these issues, which included having yearly meetings with the city representatives and getting them involved in better understanding the problem. For the community, many of the participants mentioned the new 211 program which allows an individual to call 211 on any phone and reach a directory of services, which will direct them to a place that can help them.

<div align="center">Recommendations to Social Workers</div>

This study has made it clear that there continues to be problems that affect the homeless service system in Western Riverside County. From the way many of the participants discussed the issues, these are problems that have afflicted the area for a long time now, always one step ahead of the service providers. This study also displayed the tenacity of the social service leaders: continuing to push forward, seeking a way to resolve these issues and working to alleviate the problem. This study was able to find areas where social workers on the macro, micro and research fields might continue to explore and innovate.

For social workers in the micro practice, the recommendation from this study is that existing service providers loosen their policies on who they accept into their program. It seems that, based on the findings of this study the individuals that need the most help are the ones that are not allowed to work with services due to their current issues. It is encouraging to see individuals

move quickly through a program and into the community, but it is possible that these individuals might have been able to do this even without the help of a social service agency. Social workers at existing agencies need to open their doors and allow even the most difficult clients to come in and receive services.

The one major macro recommendation for social workers that might come from this study is the idea that working together in collaboration is one of the best tools social workers and social service administrators have when working to solve as large a problem as homelessness. In collaboration it is no longer one agency doing its best to serve the needy, but a multitude of agencies all working together to make change, affecting larger areas and groups of people than any one agency could ever do individually.

Recommendations for social work policy would include continuing to seek solutions for the issue of the dually diagnosed homeless and affordable housing. Though the region has started to make strides to remedy the barriers for this population and attaining affordable housing, greater strides need to be made in developing programs and opening up beds. Policy makers need to understand that providing the financial assistance for these programs today will decrease the amount of money needed to sustain the programs and end homelessness in the future.

Lastly, recommendations for social work researchers include continuing to attempt an understanding of the effects of social work policy on the rates of homelessness in Western Riverside County. It might also be beneficial for

researchers to better understand the effects of the large distance between homeless services and the greater geographical landscape. An increased understanding about where the individuals using the services might better locate services to serve these individuals.

Limitations

Limitations of this study include unclear intentions within the research instrument. The instrument, though it was able to obtain good and important information that will help the social work community, did not go in the intended direction from the start of this study. This might also have been influenced on a narrow view at the beginning of the study and obtaining a very wide swatch of information after the interviews were conducted. This study was also unable to obtain a very wide geographical representation of homeless service providers, the majority of which operate in the City of Riverside and Moreno Valley. This limitation skewed the data to represent more of the resource rich region of Western Riverside County rather than the areas with resource gaps.

Conclusion

This study set out to better understand the underserved locations and areas of homeless service provision within Western Riverside County. This study was able to obtain a better understanding of the problems facing the region, tools that are working well to help work towards those problems

solutions, and yet more solutions that might even improve those solutions that

are already in place.

APPENDIX A

INSTRUMENT

Instrument:

1. Please state your age, ethnicity, and gender.

2. What is your title and how long have you been at this current position?

3. What are the roles associated with your title?

4. What services does your organization provide to the homeless?

5. How many homeless individuals does your agency serve?

6. Where do your clients come from?

7. What percentages of your clients originate from outside the
City your organization is located?

8. Are there other organizations within your city that also provide homeless services

9. What do you think of the available homeless services in Western Riverside County?

10. From your perspective how large a problem is homelessness in Western Riverside County?

11. How would you rank homelessness compared to other problems facing the Western Riverside County?

12. In your opinion what are the three most critical unmet needs among the homeless in Western Riverside County?

13. For each need stated above, what do you think would be the most efficient way to address them?

14. What barriers prevent people from getting services and support they need to improve the living situation they are in?

15. What changes might you suggest to service providers that might decrease homelessness in Western Riverside County?

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to investigate the availability of homeless services in Western Riverside County from the perspective of service administrators. This study is being conducted by graduate student Sarah Crane under the supervision of Professor Janet Chang, School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the School of Social Work Subcommittee of the Institutional Review Board, California State University, San Bernardino.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to understand from an administrators perspective the availability of homeless services in Western Riverside County.

DESCRIPTION: In this study you are being asked to take part in a face-to-face interview. You will be asked a few questions about your title and organization. You will also be asked to discuss your perspectives on homeless services in Western Riverside County.

PARTICIPATION: Your participation in this study is voluntary. Refusal to participate will not result in any loss of benefits you are entitled to and you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Any information from this interview will remain completely confidential. All data will be stored in recording device in a locked file cabinet and on a password protected computer such that the researcher will have sole access to it. Upon completion of research, all data will be destroyed.

DURATION: Your participation in the study should take 20-30 minutes to complete.

RISKS: There are no foreseeable risks to you for your participation in this study.

BENEFITS: A benefit of taking part in this study is to have a role in providing knowledge that can help policy makers improve homeless services. You will also receive a $5 gift certificate as payment for your time.

VIDEO/AUDIO/PHOTOGRAPH: I understand this research will be Audio Recorded. Initials____

CONTACT: If you have any questions related to the research of this study, you can contact my research advisor, Dr. Janet Change, Professor, School of Social Work, California State University, San Bernardino, 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92407, jchang@csusb.edu
909-573-5184.

RESULTS: The results of this study will be available at the Pfau Library, California State University, San Bernardino after September 2014.

CONFIRMATION STATEMENT:
I have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in your study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX C

DEBRIEFING STATMENT

Study of Homeless Services: An Administrators Perspective

Debriefing Statement

This study you have just completed was designed to investigate the perspective of administrators on homeless services in Western Riverside County.

Your views are valued and it is the hope that the information you have provided will be used to improve upon homeless services.

Thank you for your participation and for not discussing the questions in this study with other homeless services administrators. If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Sarah Crane or Dr. Janet Change, Professor of Social Work at **909-537-5184**. If you would like to obtain a copy of the results of this study, please go to the Pfau Library at California State University, San Bernardino after September 2014.

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