

5-2022

IDENTIFYING GROUPS MOST PRONE TO BECOME HOMELESS

Jesse Kruse

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IDENTIFYING GROUPS MOST
PRONE TO BECOME HOMELESS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Social Work

by
Jesse Kruse
May 2022

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ABSTRACT

This paper will attempt to determine if some groups are more prone to homelessness than other groups within the United States. Then, it will try to determine if some groups are more prone to homelessness within the Inland Empire. Research was conducted to identify if some contributing factors that cause homelessness affect some groups more than other groups. If the contributing factors to become homeless differs between different subgroups of homeless individuals, then perhaps different intervention strategies could be applied to each subgroup.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Problem Formulation

According to the Oxford Encyclopedia of Social Work, homelessness is formally defined by the United States government as, when a person lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and if they sleep in a shelter designated for temporary living accommodations or in places not designated for human habitation (Oxford Dictionary, 2021). Homelessness is not only an individual's problem, it is also a social problem, as the U.S. homeless population costs the taxpayers an average of \$35,578 dollars annually per person. With an estimated 553,742 homeless individuals living in America today, homelessness is one of the biggest issues facing social workers today (National Alliance to end Homelessness, 2017).

Homelessness is a problem for virtually every ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, however, some groups seem to be more prone to homelessness than others. As evidence for this claim, a comparison can be made between the overall U.S. population and individual groups within the U.S. population to identify over/underrepresented groups suffering from homelessness. An example of an underrepresented population can be found in the (non-Hispanic) White population. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, White Americans make-up approximately 60.1% of the U.S. population, however,

in a study done by (Hsu, et al., 2020), White Americans only made-up 13.5% of the U.S. homeless population (Census Bureau, 2020). The difference between the overall population and homeless population with White (non-Hispanic) Americans is 46.6%. Another underrepresented homeless population is Asian Americans, while Asian Americans make-up 5.6% of the U.S. population they make-up less than 1% of the U.S. homeless population (Oh, et al., 2014). According to this study, Asian Americans are underrepresented in the homeless population by 4.6%

The second largest population according to the U.S. Census Bureau are Hispanics at 18.5% (Census Bureau, 2020), but according to Hsu, et al. (2020), Hispanics make up approximately 30% of the U.S. homeless population. Unlike their white counterparts, Hispanics are overrepresented in the homeless population by 11.5% (Hsu, et al., 2020). One possible reason that Hispanics are overrepresented in the homelessness could be differences in education levels. Castaneda found that 45% of all non-Hispanics had completed high school, while only 30% of Hispanics had completed high school (Castaneda, 2014). Black Americans make-up approximately 12.2% of the U.S. population (Census Bureau, 2020), yet they make-up 44% of the homeless population (Hsu, et al., 2020). Black Americans are overrepresented in the homeless population by 31.8%, making American Blacks one of the most overrepresented groups in the homeless populations.

Another group, that is not comprised of ethnicity but are often times prone to homelessness include the LGBTIQ population. One study found that, although the LGBTIQ population comprised an estimated 5-10% of the U.S. population while they made-up an estimated 20-40% of the homeless population (Fraser, et al., 2019). Discrimination against the LGBTIQ community and breakdowns of family relationships were cited for possible reasons for such a high homeless population amongst the LGBTIQ population. There is also a disproportionate representation of homeless people in regards to gender. In a nation-wide study, one researcher found that males were much more likely than females to become homeless, with some cities reporting male homeless populations of 75% (Baker, 1994). One study cited such factors as higher substance abuse and higher incarceration rates amongst men and women receiving preferential treatment as possible reasons for male overrepresentation in the homeless population (Brown, et al., 2019).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine if some groups are clearly more prone to homelessness than others and the purpose of this study is to get a better understanding of why, so that better preventive measures can be applied to these groups. The primary mission of the social work profession is to enhance human well-being and help meet basic and complex needs of all people, with a particular focus on those who are vulnerable, oppressed, and living in poverty

(NASW, 2021). This is why it is critical for social workers to gain any possible insight to certain factors that cause homelessness and how these factors affect particular groups to combat and possibly prevent homelessness.

Similarly, to homelessness certain groups are more prone to particular factors that correlate highly with homelessness than other groups. This study hopes to provide a better understanding on how cultural and societal factors such as substance abuse, mental illness, unemployment, and lack of education affect certain groups, so that custom preventive measures can be applied to these groups to help combat homelessness. Perhaps by employing custom preventive measures to individual groups as opposed to a one size fits all approach, social workers might get better results in reducing the homeless population.

This will be an exploratory study that will take into account demographic, cultural, and societal differences among homeless groups. This information may then be used to formulate specific strategies to particular homeless populations. Secondary data collection techniques will be used in order to get a nation-wide perspective of homelessness and because this technique will provide the largest collection of participants as possible.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

Ideally, the information obtained in this study can be used by social workers on the micro, mezzo, and macro levels. On the micro level, a social worker may use information from this study to intervene their clients from

engaging in certain behavioral habits that might lead to homelessness such as excessive drug use or dropping out of school. On the mezzo level, social workers might create support groups for certain groups that might be more susceptible than other groups for homelessness such as LGBTQ or those that might suffer from mental illnesses. Information from this study might also be beneficial for social workers on the macro level. For example, if a city had a population majority of Hispanics, the city might want to invest heavily in educational programs to keep kids in school being that Hispanics have a high drop-out rate in school. This study blends nicely into a social worker's generalists model because it acknowledges and explores how certain biopsychosocial factors affect some groups differently.

Being that virtually every ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation have the potential to become homeless, it could be beneficial to the social work profession, to have a better understanding why certain groups are more likely to become homeless. If certain groups were more prone to homelessness than other groups perhaps preventive measures could be taken to reduce the probability of these individuals becoming homeless. Preventing homelessness would not only be beneficial to an individual on the micro level, but also to society as a whole on the macro level. The question the current study will address is: Are some groups more prone to homelessness than other groups, in the Inland Empire?

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Homelessness is one of the biggest issues facing social workers today and getting a better understanding of marginalized groups can be useful in preventing homelessness in those groups. Once marginalized groups can be identified, then contributing factors to homelessness in these marginalized groups might also be identified, then possible intervention could be implemented for these groups. There are many contributing factors in homelessness that must be explored in order to get a sense of why some groups are more likely than others to become homeless. Some factors that cause or contribute to homelessness include substance/alcohol abuse, mental health, unemployment, and educational levels.

Substance Abuse

There is a common perception that there is a correlation between homelessness and substance abuse, but is substance abuse a direct factor in the cause of homelessness or is substance abuse a result of homelessness? For practical purposes, “recreational” substance use will not be applied in the presented data, as it may dilute the true contribution that “problematic” substance use has in becoming homeless. Problematic substance abuse will be defined as,

dominating a person's life at the expense of other activities and has negative mental and/or physical side effects. In a study by Johnson, et al., (2008), 34% of people reported having a substance abuse problem before becoming homeless. While 66% of individuals reported having a problematic substance abuse problem after they became homeless.

The National Coalition for the Homeless found that 38% of homeless people are alcohol dependent, and 26% are dependent on other substances (Addiction Center, 2021), and a study by Vangeest, et al., (2002), found that 81% of homeless individuals had a problematic substance abuse problem. The LGBTQ community is especially affected when it comes to addiction and homelessness as Psychology Today found that homeless LGBTQ individuals have the highest percentage of drug and alcohol abuse. Members of the LGBTQ community also have a 120% higher risk of homelessness than their heterosexual counterparts (Addiction Center, 2021).

Whether substance abuse is the cause or effect of homelessness is undetermined, however, according to the data in these studies, substance abuse and homelessness seem to correlate somehow, and to a high degree.

Mental Illness

Many would probably agree that it would be difficult to obtain and maintain a permanent residence, if a person suffered from a severe mental illness. One homeless shelter in Los Angeles, California performed structured interviews with

their residents to determine their mental health status, in order to get a better understanding of their client's needs. There was a total of 328 residence surveyed, and it was determined that 13% suffered from schizophrenia, 18% suffered from major depression, 9% suffered from dysthymia, and 3% suffered from severe cognitive impairment.

The same structured interview was conducted abroad at another homeless shelter in Munich, Germany. This time, there were 146 residence surveyed, and it was determined that 12% suffered from schizophrenia, 18% suffered from major depression, 5% suffered from dysthymia, and 9% suffered from severe cognitive impairment (Vazquez, et al., 2001).

Other findings suggest up to 33% of homeless individuals suffer from mental illnesses (Addiction Center, 2021), which can often lead to drug and alcohol abuse as a means for self-medicating. While some might find temporary relief with self-medicating, usually a person just creates a co-occurring disorder with their substance abuse that creates a destructive cycle of dependency compounded by their illness symptoms. Some of the common mental disorders a homeless person might suffer from include bipolar disorder, delusions, paranoia, schizophrenia, PTSD, anxiety, and depression.

Further evidence of mental illness affecting homeless individuals can be seen in a study by Brown, et al., (2017), which found that, out of 130 homeless individuals in one homeless shelter, 52.8% had been diagnosed at some point

with a psychotic disorder. The findings in these studies could indicate a correlation between mental illness and homelessness.

Unemployment Status

Unemployment status might be another issue that effects different groups in different ways and is most likely a big reason why people become homeless. There are a great number of empirical studies (e.g. Brown, et al., 2018, Fraser, et al., 2019, Hsu, et al., 2020, and Oh, et al., 2014), that attribute causes to homelessness to individual factors such as addiction or mental disorders, but structural factors can also be a factor such as poverty rates or unemployment. Evidence for unemployment effecting the homeless population can be seen in a study by Calvo, et al., (2017), where they compared unemployment rates against homeless populations in Spain to see if they could find a direct correlation between these variables. The results of the study found that there is a positive correlation between unemployment and homelessness in Spain.

While many individuals have co-occurring problems, which result in homelessness, a study conducted in Washington (2020) found a significant number of individuals report unemployment as the sole reason for being homeless. A group of 1,629 participants were surveyed and asked, what they thought was the reason(s) for their homelessness. Many of the participants attributed unemployment as the sole reason for their unemployment and 61.11%

of the participants attributed unemployment with co-occurring problems for becoming homeless (Heerde, et al., 2020).

Being homeless can make gaining or maintaining formal employment extremely difficult because homelessness presents certain barriers to employment that others might not have to contend with. When a person does not have a home, they may not have an address to put on a resume or they may not have a phone number for an employer to call them back. A homeless job candidate might not have clean clothes to interview in or access to a shower and might not have reliable transportation, which might also limit job opportunities.

Lack of Education

In the past, students that dropped out of high school would have a decent chance at securing an entry-level position at a good company or becoming an apprenticeship in a skilled trade of some kind. These days, dropping out of high school is associated with negative outcomes such as lower wages, fewer employment opportunities, and less chances of meaningful promotions. The U.S. Department of Education reported that in 2009, adults 18 to 67 that did not complete high school earned an average income of \$25,000, which is considerably less than the average income of individuals of the same age that had completed high school (Ausikaitis, et al., 2015).

Further evidence of income disparities can be seen with the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, (2021), which asserts that those without a high school

diploma have a median weekly income of \$606, compared to \$749 for high school graduates and \$1,281 for those with a college degree. These statistics can offer an explanation to why education levels correlate with homelessness, when Ramsey, (2021) reports that the median monthly rent for an apartment in California was \$1,900, which is approximately three quarters of what someone without a high school diploma makes monthly.

Besides making less than those that complete at least a high school education, the risk for homelessness also increases as education levels are decreased. In a study conducted by Aratani, et al., (2015), 35% of individuals with repeated homeless episodes had not completed high school.

Gaps in Literature

There was some literature regarding specific homeless populations (e.g. Brown, et al., 2018, Fraser, et al., 2019, Hsu, et al., 2020, and Oh, et al., 2014), which presented significant population samples and the research offers some ethnic data, however, there were no specific ethnic comparisons done which specifically sought to identify marginalized homeless populations. Understanding if certain groups tend to be more marginalized in homeless populations than others could be the first step in preventing these groups from becoming homeless. Another reason why understanding why certain groups are more prone than others to become homeless is important is because intervention strategies could then be culturally adjusted to specific groups.

Some research offers possible reasons why a person might become homeless, (e.g. Aratani, et al., 2015, Ausikaitis, et al., 2015, Calvo, et al., 2017, and Heerde, et al., 2020). These articles cite such factors in homelessness as substance abuse, mental illness, unemployment, and education levels. This research does a good job in demonstrating how certain societal factors could correlate with becoming homeless. However, a gap in this research is correlating whether certain societal factors affect certain groups more than other groups. Perhaps, if social workers had a better understanding of how certain societal factors effected specific homeless populations then perhaps more efficient interventions could be applied to those marginalized groups.

Theories Guiding Conceptualization

This study will be based on the theoretical framework of systems theory to approach the research question, Are some groups more prone to homelessness than other groups, in the Inland Empire?

Systems theory was originally conceptualized in 1968 by Ludwig von Bertalanffy and it has been used by the social sciences as a way to explain how micro, exo, and macro systems influence an individual. Systems theory is a holistic way of examining how smaller systems come together to affect the greater complex system that can't be easily explained or rationalized when looking at any single system individually.

When systems theory is applied to social work, it allows those in the field to look into a client's individual conditions and factors to get a better perspective of why a person might face certain issues or hardships (Online MSW Programs, 2021). Three critical areas are explored when using systems, the first being, the microsystems, which includes relationships with family members, peers, teachers, and other individual relationships. The second, exosystems, identifies such institutional factors such as a person's neighborhood, doctors, dentists, and schools. The third area, macrosystems includes situational factors such as a person's culture, socioeconomic status, nationality, and political factors.

One reason why systems theory is a good way to explore this research question is, it can take into account factors at the microsystem such as substance abuse and mental illness which can contribute to homelessness. It also looks at exosystems such as schools, which might have an effect on a person's education level, which can contribute to homelessness. Finally, systems theory looks at macrosystems such as political or economic circumstances, that can lead to unemployment, which is also a contributing factor for homelessness. When all of these factors are taken into account and applied to individuals or groups, a bigger picture might emerge to produce data that can help social workers prevent homelessness before it happens.

Summary

There are many reasons that cause a person to lose their home and it can be beneficial to explore these factors. If certain factors affect particular groups more than others, it would behoove the field of social work to learn if some biopsychosocial factors affect certain groups more than others. One way that this can be done is by applying systems theory to the research question “are some groups more prone to homelessness than other groups in the Inland Empire?” and to the issue of homelessness in general.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODS

There is plenty of research regarding homeless populations and there is plenty of research that explores contributing factors to homelessness. However, there is little to no research that explores if certain groups are more prone to homelessness than other groups. Because there is little research regarding this question, this study will be an exploratory study, that will use surveys to gain qualitative data, which might give a better understanding to the research question.

Study Design

The purpose of this study is to explore specific aspects of homelessness that might not have been explicitly explored in other studies regarding homelessness. Some of these aspects include whether or not certain populations are more prone to homelessness than other groups and if so, why?

Qualitative data will be obtained for this study via surveys. A cross-sectional survey design will provide demographic data (See Appendix A) to identify overrepresented/underrepresented homeless populations. This information can be useful in social work on the macro level so that funds can be allocated as a preventive measure to groups that are more prone than others to become homeless.

Some of the strengths of this study include identifying overrepresented/underrepresented homeless groups or populations. Another benefit of this study will be identifying biopsychosocial themes that affect overrepresented homeless groups to become homeless and remain homeless. Another strength of this research project will be the narrative provided by homeless individuals, that can provide better insight and understanding to the field of social work. With this insight and understanding gained from this research, it is hoped that better preventive measures can be used and better solutions can be made. This study should also be easy to replicate if any other researchers wanted simulate this study amongst a group or population in another geographical region.

Some of the weaknesses of this study include not being able to determine specific cause and effect relationships within groups to differing biopsychosocial factors. Another weakness of this study is that the interviews will only be given to homeless individuals in Riverside, California and will not represent the rest of the nation's homeless populations. Another limitation of this study will be the relatively few number of participants that will be sampled, if more participants were involved in the study then a more accurate demographic representation could be given. This is also a vulnerable population and because of this, some questions could not be asked of the participants that might have been able to differentiate the groups more.

Sampling

This study will use purposeful sampling consisting of no more than fifty homeless individuals from a Riverside homeless camp at which I occasionally volunteer at. All of the individuals in this study will be over the age of eighteen but there will be no maximum age limit requirement. The minimum age requirement for this study was established in order to avoid any legal or ethical issues and to protect a vulnerable underage population. Each participant will also be asked to take a decisional capacity to consent in order to participate (See Appendix B). All nationalities, religious backgrounds, genders, and sexual orientations will be welcomed to participate in this study. Individuals with mental health disorders and drug addictions will also be invited to take part in this study if they can complete the decisional capacity to consent form. This study hopes by involving homeless individuals from multiple backgrounds, it will create a broad insightful perspective into homelessness.

Data Collection and Instruments

The data collection technique will use a custom-made survey of demographic questions that were specifically designed to gather exactly the demographic information that will be useful to this study and making the measure valid. The survey will gather information regarding race, gender, sexual orientation, educational background, history of substance abuse, mental illnesses, and employment status. SPSS statistics will be used to quantify the

results a tried and true statistical program which will add to the validity of the measure.

Procedures

A non-formal coalition of volunteers which goes to a specific homeless camp in Riverside, Ca. every Tuesday to offer aid to the residents is where the researcher will recruit participants for this study. A raffle will also be held in order to incentivize participation amongst the residents. Every participant will be given a raffle ticket which will give them one chance to win the prize, a twenty-dollar gift card. The odds of winning the gift card will depend on the number of participants involved in the study. Surveys will be handed out to the participants and then gathered by myself. The survey was designed to be brief, understandable, and should only take a maximum of five-minutes to fill out.

Protection of Human Subjects

The participants in this study will be protected by anonymity as they will be identified by numbers and their names will never be revealed. Each participant will also be asked a couple of questions in order to insure, that the participant has the decisional capacity for consent. The survey results will go straight from the participant into a closed container controlled by the researcher. All of the interview questions will be given on a one-to-one basis to ensure confidentiality. All of the participants will receive an informed consent (See Appendix C) form

and debriefing statement and the researcher will clarify any questions the participants might have regarding these forms. A participant will not be allowed to participate unless the researcher believes that the participant is in full understanding of the informed consent or debriefing statement.

Data Analysis

The survey portion of this study that targets demographics should give an indication if there are overrepresented/underrepresented homeless groups or populations by yielding descriptive statistics. The results of the survey should relate directly to the research question, are some groups more prone to homelessness than other groups in the United States? The homeless demographics collected in this study will then be quantified and compared against the national homeless population to determine if the same groups are over/under represented.

Summary

There are many studies that have been done regarding homelessness. However, there is little to no homeless research that identifies overrepresented/underrepresented groups or populations. This study is also unique because it acknowledges that demographic factors might be a contributing factor in the likelihood that a person might become homeless and how differing intervention strategies might be beneficial to differing homeless

groups or populations. This study also hopes to offer possible solutions that a social worker can take into consideration when planning an intervention.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

In order to get a more detailed depiction as to whether or not some groups are more prone to homelessness than other groups, particularly within the Inland Empire, the national averages were added to the collected sample. In the first group of tables, the national averages of homeless groups are displayed, which identify groups that are most likely to become homeless in the United States. These tables also identify over/underrepresented homeless groups when compared against overall U.S. population numbers. The second group of tables represent a sample of homeless groups living in the Inland Empire. These tables also identify over/underrepresented homeless groups when compared against U.S. population numbers.

An overall population by race, which will help determine if some racial groups are over/underrepresented when compared to their homelessness rates.

Table 1. Overall Population Percentage by Race in the U.S.

Population by Race	N= 329.5 Million
White	60.1%
Hispanics	18.5%
African Americans	12.2%
Asian Americans	5.6%
Other Nationalities	.6%

When these percentages are compared against the U.S. Census statistics on overall population by race, certain groups appear over/underrepresented.

Table 2. Over/underrepresented Homelessness by Race in the U.S.

Population by Race	N=553,742
White	13.5%
Hispanics	30%
African Americans	44%
Asian Americans	1%
Other Nationalities	11.5%

This table gives the exact number that each racial group is either over/underrepresented as being homeless, when compared against the U.S. Census statistics.

Table 3. Percentage of Over/Underrepresentation Homeless Population by Race in the U.S.

Population by Race	
White	Underrepresented by 46.6%
Hispanics	Overrepresented by 11.5%
African Americans	Overrepresented by 31.8%
Asian Americans	Underrepresented by 4.6%
Other Nationalities	Overrepresented by 7.9%

This table compares overall gender statistics in the U.S. according to the U.S. census Bureau.

Table 4. Overall Population by Gender in the U.S.

Genders	N=329.5 Million
Females	50.52%
Males	49.48%

A table that displays how genders are affected differently within the U.S.

Table 5. Overall Homeless Population by Gender in the U.S.

Genders	N= 553,742
Females	29%
Males	71%

This table represents which racial groups are over/underrepresented as being homeless in the Inland Empire when compared to the U.S. Census Overall racial percentages of each racial group

Table 6. Percentage of Over/underrepresented Homeless Populations by Race in
the Inland Empire
(Compare Against the National Average)

Population by Race	
White	Underrepresented by 11.9%
Hispanics	Overrepresented by 12.5%
African Americans	Overrepresented by 5%
Asian Americans	Underrepresented by 5.6%
Other Nationalities	Overrepresented by 3.26%

A table which displays the overall homeless sample population by gender in the Inland Empire according to the collected data.

Table 7. Homeless Sample Population by Gender in the Inland Empire

Genders	N= 29
Females	27.5%
Males	72.4%

This table shows how genders are affected differently by homelessness within the Inland Empire according to the sample chosen to participate in this study.

Table 8. Percentage of Over/underrepresented Homeless Populations by Gender
in the Inland Empire
(Compared Against the National Average)

Genders	
Females	Underrepresented by 23.02%
Males	Overrepresented by 22.92%

A table that displays how certain racial groups are over/underrepresented by homelessness in the Inland Empire according to the sample chosen to participate in this study.

Table 9. Comparing Homeless Populations by Race Nationally to the Inland Empire

Population by Race	
White	Difference in Underrepresentation 34.7%
Hispanics	Difference in Overrepresentation 1%
African Americans	Difference in Overrepresentation 26.8%
Asian Americans	Difference in Underrepresentation 5.6%
Other Nationalities	Difference in Overrepresentation 4.64%

A table comparing how genders are affected by homelessness in either the U.S. or the Inland Empire respectively.

Table 10. Comparing Over/Underrepresented Homeless Populations by Gender Nationally to the Inland Empire

Genders	
Females	Difference in Underrepresentation 1.5%
Males	Difference in Overrepresentation 9.56%

Sexual orientation of the participants in this study, which may or may not be a contributing factor to homelessness.

Possible Contributing Factors to Homelessness for the Inland Empire Sample

Table 11. (Sexual Orientation in Percentages)

Sexual Orientation	N= 29
Straight	86.2%
Gay	3%
Bisexual	10.3%

Education levels of the participants in this study, which may or may not be a contributing factor to homelessness.

Table 12. (Education Level in Percentages)

Education Level	
High School	72.4%
GED	13.8%
Trade School	6.8%
Some College- Did not finish	6.8%

Employment status of the participants in this study, which may or may not be a contributing factor to homelessness.

Table 13, (Employment Status in Percentages)

Employment Status	
Unemployed	72.4%
Employed	27.6%

The tables that have been provided above, allow for an apples-to-apples comparison between overall homeless populations within the United States and

homeless populations within the Inland Empire. By doing this, reoccurring themes and patterns can be seen to determine if some groups are indeed more prone to homeless than other groups in the United States and the Inland Empire. Also, provided in the tables are a couple of possible contributing factors that might have cause the Inland Empire homeless sample to become homeless. One reason why understanding if certain groups are more prone to homelessness than other groups is, it might serve homeless populations best if social workers would provide specific interventions to individual homeless groups, rather than a one size fits all approach.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This section will discuss how different racial and gender groups are affected by homelessness, both nationally and in the Inland Empire. By using data collected nationally and within the Inland Empire, certain reoccurring themes can be identified such as over/underrepresented homeless populations. Differences in gender within homeless populations also seem prevalent and will be explored in this section. Potential contributing factors to homelessness such as education level, sexual orientation, and employment status will also be discussed. Finally, this section will discuss how the findings in this research can be applied in social work practice, along with a conclusion.

Discussion

The data displayed in table 1. was provided by the U.S. (Census Bureau, 2020), and is instrumental because without it, there would be no way to determine if certain racial groups were over/underrepresented as homeless. The U.S. is comprised of approximately 329.5 million people and of those people, a significant portion (60.1%) are White. The second largest racial group in the U.S. are Hispanics at 18.5%, followed by African Americans at 12.2%. Asian

Americans represent 5.6% of the U.S. population, while .6% of the U.S. population identify as being something other than these racial categories.

Because White Americans represent such a significant portion of the U.S. population, it might be expected that they would also represent a significant portion of the homeless population. However, in the U.S. Whites only make-up 13.5% of the homeless population. And while African Americans represent approximately 12.2% of the U.S. overall population, they represent the largest number of homeless people living in the U.S. at 44%. Similar disproportions in representation of homeless groups can be seen with Asian Americans in the U.S. While representing 5.6% of the overall population, they only represent approximately 1% of the homeless population. Hispanics in the U.S. on the other hand represent approximately 30% of the homeless population, while they represent 18.5 of the overall population.

Over/Underrepresented Homeless Populations by Race in the U.S.

When the total number of each population by race is compared to the total number of homeless people by race, certain groups emerge as being over/underrepresented. For example, Whites in the U.S. are underrepresented in the homeless population by 46.6%, while Asian Americans are the only other group that is underrepresented at 4.6%. On the other side of the spectrum, African Americans are overrepresented in the homeless population by 31.8%.

Hispanics are also overrepresented in the homeless population by 11.5%, while other nationalities are overrepresented by 7.9%.

This might suggest that certain factors affect some groups more than other groups, which might cause homelessness. This could imply that homeless groups either face different challenges in regards to gaining or maintaining a residence. These disparities that cause either over or underrepresentation in homeless populations might prompt further research into reasons why some groups appear to be more prone than others to become homeless. To understand that some groups appear to be more likely to become homeless than other groups underscores the importance of researching homeless populations by groups.

If more researchers approached the homeless issue through a lens of differences rather than a one size fits all approach, it might lend a better understanding as to how people become homeless, why they become homeless, at what reasons cause homelessness, or if different areas increase or decrease the likeliness of homelessness. Because nationally, there are groups that are clearly more prone to homelessness than other groups, it confirms the importance of researching why some groups are more likely to be homeless than others.

According to the (Census Bureau, 2020) women represent just over fifty percent of the total U.S. population at 50.52%. While men represent just under fifty percent of the total U.S. population at 49.48%. These numbers are important

because they are needed to determine if genders are also a determining factor in regards to homelessness. Although women account for more than fifty percent of the overall population, they only represent approximately 29% of the homeless population within the U.S. Men too are nearly fifty percent of the overall population in the U.S., but they represent 71% of the homeless population in the U.S.

Over/Underrepresented Homeless Populations by Gender in the U.S.

Just as race appears to be a factor in the likeliness of a person becoming homeless, the data regarding gender might suggest a similar outcome. The disparities between female homeless rates and male homeless rates could imply that a person's gender might also be a predictive or contributing factor to homelessness. Because there are significant differences between male and female homeless rates, it might prompt further research into factors that cause homelessness, and how gender plays a role.

These nationwide findings underscore the importance of researchers paying attention to marginalized homeless groups and not lumping homeless people into one category. With some racial groups and males appearing to be more prone than other groups to become homeless, it might be a call for other researchers to find out why. Further research into gender differences and gender might indicate how gender factors into homelessness, and why males are more likely to become homeless. The fact that men are more likely to become

homeless in the U.S. confirms the importance of looking into gender as a possible factor in homelessness.

Over/Underrepresented Homeless Populations by Race in the Inland Empire

Certain racial groups within the Inland Empire appear to be more likely to become homeless than other groups. Similar to the national homeless populations, some groups are more prone to homelessness than others. Hispanics within the Inland Empire sample are overrepresented in the homeless population by 12.5%. African Americans are also overrepresented as a homeless population by 5%, and other nationalities are overrepresented by 3.26%. The Inland Empire sample of 29 participants had homeless individuals that identified as being White were underrepresented by 11.9%. The Inland Empire sample also had Asians as an underrepresented group by 5.6%.

The Inland Empire sample that was collected demonstrates that national homeless populations and Inland Empire homeless populations both have specific groups that are more likely to become homeless than others. These findings confirm the importance of researching homeless population by specific groups such as race and gender. Because both national homeless populations and Inland Empire homeless populations have over/underrepresented homeless groups, it might suggest that certain groups are more susceptible to factors that might cause homelessness.

These findings could imply that, if some groups are more susceptible to homelessness than others, then perhaps intervention strategies can be created to prevent the vulnerability to homelessness for these groups. Formulated specific intervention strategies for specific homeless populations might prompt further research into what contributing factors to homelessness affect each specific homeless population the most. Specific intervention strategies for specific homeless population underscores the importance of understanding what factors are most likely to cause homelessness for specific groups. Finding these answers might be a call to action for social workers. Further research might indicate how some factors affect some homeless groups more than others, and why race and gender can either increase or decrease the likeliness of becoming homeless.

Over/underrepresented Homeless Populations by Gender in the Inland Empire

Similar to the national homeless population, there was a noticeable difference between gender populations within the Inland Empire. Out of the 29 participants that contributed in this study, 27.5% were female and 72.4% were male. When compared to the overall national average, women are underrepresented by 23.02% and men are overrepresented by 22.92%. These numbers indicate that there are approximately 44.9% more men that are homeless than women in the Inland Empire.

Because males are so much more likely than females to become homeless both nationally and in the Inland Empire, it might suggest that homelessness is predominantly a male problem. This could imply that there could be systematic, environmental, or other contributing factors to homelessness that males are more susceptible to. This knowledge might prompt further research into the correlation between males and homelessness. This knowledge also confirms the importance of addressing homelessness through the lens of gender.

Addressing the homelessness issue through the lens of gender might be a call to a collaboration between social workers and gender studies professionals. Homelessness is probably one of the biggest issues a social worker will face, which underscores the importance of addressing it. And the role that gender plays in determining homelessness demonstrates that further research needs to be done. Researching gender and homelessness might indicate how women are less likely to become homeless, why men are more susceptible to homelessness, and if there are geographic locations where females are more likely than men to become homeless.

Over/Underrepresented Homeless Populations Nationally Compared to the Inland Empire

Differences in homeless populations likeliness to become homeless have been seen across racial lines, gender lines, and now they can be seen across geographical lines. The national average for homeless Whites 13.5% which is an

underrepresentation of 46.6 when compared to the overall population of Whites. In the Inland Empire sample population, Whites account for 48% of the homeless population. This would make Whites underrepresented by 11.9%, a difference of underrepresentation by 34.7% in the Inland Empire.

More racial differences in over/underrepresentation by race can be seen between the national averages and the Inland Empire. For example, African Americans represent 44% of the homeless population nationally, but only represented 17% in the Inland Empire, which is a difference in overrepresentation of 26.8%. Because there were no Asian participants in the Inland Empire sample, they were underrepresented by their national average total of 5.6%. Hispanic homeless populations in the Inland Empire were consistent with the national average, as there was only 1% difference between the two.

The differences between over/underrepresentation homeless populations when comparing national averages with the Inland Empire sample demonstrates the geographical differences may also be a determining factor to homelessness. This comparison confirms the importance of researching geographical differences, along with race and gender in regards to homelessness. The Inland Empire sample might suggest that Whites are more likely to be homeless in the Inland Empire. While the Inland Empire could imply that African Americans are less likely to become homeless in the Inland Empire.

These geographical differences in over/underrepresentation by race, might prompt further research as to why White and Black homeless populations changed significantly, while Hispanics and other groups did not. These findings underscore the importance of determining how various racial, systematic, geographical, and environmental factors affect specific homeless populations differently. If researchers were to associate specific contributing factors for homelessness to specific groups, it might indicate how preventive measures can be used for each specific group, and why certain groups are more susceptible than other groups to particular factors.

When comparing gender differences in over/underrepresentation homeless populations nationally against the Inland Empire sample, there is not much difference between the female sample with 1.5% difference. The difference between over/underrepresentation homeless populations nationally against the Inland Empire sample, there is a 9.56% difference. This data not only reiterates that there are significant differences in homeless populations in regards to gender, but it also demonstrates that geographic locations can also increase or decrease the likelihood of certain groups becoming homeless.

Possible Contributing Factors to Homelessness for the Inland Empire Sample

Sexual Orientation

Nationally, sexual orientation seems to be a correlating factor to homelessness. According to (Fraser, et al., 2019), the LGBTQ population

comprise an estimated 5-10% of the U.S. population, while making up an estimated 20-40% of the homeless population. However, in the Inland Empire sample, sexual orientation does not seem to be as big of a factor as it is nationally. Of the Inland Empire participants in this study 86.2% identified as straight, 3% identified as being gay, and 10.3% identified as being bisexual.

These findings might suggest that sexual orientation is not as big of a factor to cause homelessness within the Inland Empire as it is nationally. This data could imply that just like race and gender differences, geographical differences could also be a contributing factor to homelessness with sexual orientation. This demonstrates the importance of researching homeless groups as subgroups, because it appears that some groups are more prone to homelessness than other groups. These findings might be a call for homeless researchers to change the way that they view homeless populations.

With significant differences being seen between national homeless populations and Inland Empire homeless populations, it confirms the importance of researching the homeless population into subgroups. By breaking the homeless population down into subgroups, researchers might begin to get a better understanding as to how sexual orientation, race, gender, and geographical location factor into homelessness. It may also explain why some of these homeless subgroups are affected differently to events that cause homelessness or where and when homelessness is most likely and least likely to occur.

Education Levels

Another possible contributing factor to homelessness might be a lack of formal education. Of the homeless sample that was taken in the Inland Empire, 72.4% of the participants disclosed that the highest level of education that they received was high school. While 13.8% stated that the highest level of education that they received was a GED. A small percentage of the Inland Empire sample had attended trade school (6.8%), while a small percentage (6.8%) stated that they had some college education but no degree.

Employment Status

Whether a person is employed or not made a significant difference on the probability that a person would be homeless or not. With the Inland Empire homeless sample population, 72.4% were currently unemployed. Out of the Inland Empire homeless sample population, 27.6% reported that they were currently employed.

Applying This Research to Social Work

The main goal of this research was to inform social work practitioners and homeless researchers that homelessness has many factors that should be taken into account. Some of the factors include race, which seems to influence the probability of a person becoming homeless, both nationally and within the Inland Empire. Another factor that should be accounted for is gender. Both national and

Inland Empire homeless populations are dominated by males. Finally, the to understand that geographical location can also play a role in the likeliness of a particular group becoming homeless.

If these factors are taken into account in social work practice, then perhaps preventive strategies could be used to at risk populations, possibly preventing homelessness. Another way this research can be used is by approaching specific homeless populations with tailor made intervention strategies, which resonate better with a particular subgroup. To approach every homeless population and subgroup as if they are the same group has not been working. Perhaps social workers need to meet subgroups where they are at, sort of a combination of cultural competency and knowing your audience.

Homelessness researchers might explore why certain races are more likely to become homeless than other groups. Is it systematic, environmental, or cultural factors that affect some racial groups more than other groups? They could also research how women seem to avoid homelessness better than men do. Or why men seem to be more affected by homelessness than their female counterparts. Researchers might also investigate how a person's geographical location can either increase or decrease the likelihood that a particular group can become homeless. Finally, researchers might look into correlational factors such as mental health, education levels, employment status, and sexual orientation to see how these factors affect each homeless subgroup.

In conclusion, homelessness is a world-wide issue that social workers on every continent will inevitably encounter. The old way of addressing homelessness as a one size fits all approach has proven itself to be ineffective. Which should open the doors for new approaches to address homelessness. Perhaps by addressing homelessness through the lens of subgroups that are affected by certain systematic, environmental, geographical factors differently than other groups might yield better results. And the first step in this process would be to, identifying groups that are most prone to become homeless.

APPENDIX A
SURVEYS

Please Circle the Answer You Wish to Choose

1 What race do you consider yourself to be? White, Hispanic, Black, Asian, Other

2 What gender were you assigned at birth? Male, Female

3 What sexual orientation do you consider yourself to be? Straight, Gay, or Bi-Sexual

4 What is the highest level of education that you completed? _____

5 Are you currently employed? Yes, or No

APPENDIX B
DECISIONAL CAPACITY TO CONSENT

Decisional Capacity to Consent

All participants will need to be able to answer the following questions to be able to take part in this study

1 Can you tell me about the purpose of this study?

2 Can you tell me about any potential risk as a result of participating in this study?

3 Can you tell me about any potential benefits of participating in this study?

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate in is designed to examine if some groups are more prone to homelessness than other groups in the Inland Empire. The study is being by Jesse Kruse, a graduate student, under the supervision of Dr. Armando Barragan, Associate Professor in the School of Social Work at California State University, San Bernardino (CSUSB). The study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at CSUSB.

Purpose: The purpose of the study is to examine if some groups are more prone to homelessness than other groups.

Description: Participants will be given a structured survey to determine demographic data and possible attributes to homelessness. Open-ended interview questions will also be used to gain perspective to homeless issues.

Participation: Your participation in the study is totally voluntary. You can refuse to participate in the study or discontinue your participation at any time without any consequences.

Confidentiality: Your responses will remain confidential and data will be reported in group form only.

Duration: It will take 5 to 10 minutes to complete the survey and interview.

Risks: Although not anticipated, there may be some discomfort in answering some of the questions. You are not required to answer and can skip questions or end your participation at any time.

Benefits: The participants have a chance to win a 20\$ gift card via raffle. And the findings from the study will contribute to our knowledge in this area of research.

Contact: If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Barragan at (909) 637-3501.

Results: Results of the study can be obtained from the Pfau Library ScholarWorks database (<http://scholarworks.lib.csusb.edu/>) at California State University, San Bernardino after July 2022.

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I agree to have this interview be audio recorded: ____ Yes ____ No

I understand that I must be 18 years of age or older to participate in the study, I have read and understand the consent document and agree to participate in the study.

_____ Place an X mark here

_____ Date

APPENDIX D
IRB ACCEPTANCE

December 3, 2021

CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Expedited Review

IRB-FY2022-43

Status: Approved

Thomas DavisJesse Kruse
CSBS - Social Work
California State University, San Bernardino
5500 University Parkway
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Thomas DavisJesse Kruse:

Your application to use human subjects, titled "Identifying Groups Most Prone to Become Homeless" has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. The CSUSB IRB has weighed the risk and benefits of the study to ensure the protection of human participants. The study is approved as of December 3, 2021. The study will require an annual administrative check-in (annual report) on the current status of the study on --. Please use the renewal form to complete the annual report.

This approval notice does not replace any departmental or additional campus approvals which may be required including access to CSUSB campus facilities and affiliate campuses. Investigators should consider the changing COVID-19 circumstances based on current CDC, California Department of Public Health, and campus guidance and submit appropriate protocol modifications to the IRB as needed. CSUSB campus and affiliate health screenings should be completed for all campus human research related activities. Human research activities conducted at off-campus sites should follow CDC, California Department of Public Health, and local guidance. See CSUSB's [COVID-19 Prevention Plan](#) for more information regarding campus requirements.

If your study is closed to enrollment, the data has been de-identified, and you're only analyzing the data - you may close the study by submitting the Closure Application Form through the Cayuse Human Ethics (IRB) system. The Cayuse system automatically reminds you at 90, 60, and 30 days before the study is due for renewal or submission of your annual report (administrative check-in). The modification, renewal, study closure, and unanticipated/adverse event forms are located in the Cayuse system with instructions provided on the IRB Applications, Forms, and Submission Webpage. Failure to notify the IRB of the following requirements may result in disciplinary action. Please note a lapse in your approval may result in your not being able to use the data collected during the lapse in the application's approval period.

You are required to notify the IRB of the following as mandated by the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) federal regulations 45 CFR 46 and CSUSB IRB policy.

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