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## HOMELESSNESS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: A LOOK TOWARD PREVENTION

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HOMELESSNESS IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA: A LOOK TOWARD  
PREVENTION

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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  
Esmeralda Arellano

And  
Briana Sanchez

May 2022

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## ABSTRACT

Despite living in the richest country in the world, many individuals and families across the United States face the harsh reality of homelessness. A social phenomenon, homelessness has affected hundreds of thousands of people every year. The impact of homelessness has been detrimental across the whole country, including Southern California. This exploratory study raised two questions: (1) What are contributing factors to homelessness in Southern California? (2) How can homelessness in South California be prevented? Taking a qualitative approach, this study interviewed 15 participants, 10 social workers and 5 people living in/or having experienced homelessness (N = 15). Thematic analysis yielded four themes: 1) many factors lead to homelessness, 2) people experiencing homelessness do use social services, 3) people experiencing homelessness face structural and personal barriers, and 4) addressing homeless requires a broad range of programs. These findings have significant implications for theory, research, social work practice, and social work education in the post-COVID-19 era.

*Keywords:* homelessness, Southern California, qualitative research, social services

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- Esmeralda Arellano and Briana Sanchez

## DEDICATION

I would like to thank my family for all the support they have given me throughout my entire education. It has been a long journey, but you all cheered me on every step of the way. I love you all and I am forever grateful for your support!

-Briana Sanchez

This project is dedicated to my grandchildren, Fabian, Avae, and Little Sergio. To my children, Denise and Sergio Jr., thank you for being my biggest motivation for furthering my education. I want the both of you to know that it is never too late to accomplish your dreams. To my husband Sergio, thank you for all your support throughout this journey, but most importantly for believing in me. I did it!

-Esmeralda Arellano

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

### Problem Formulation

According to the 1867 Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, being homeless is defined as a person/s who “lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or when their primary residence is a temporary place for people about to be institutionalized, any place not meant for regular sleeping accommodation by humans, or supervised temporary shelter” (as cited in National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2007). There are many contributing factors that can lead to homelessness; such as individual health, mental health, substance abuse issues, and trauma (Barret et al., 2011). In 2020, San Bernardino County alone reported 2,390 unsheltered individuals who fall short of core services and are not well served by categorical systems of care (San Bernardino County Homeless Partnership, 2020).

The United States has many parties working to combat homelessness, such as human service workers who respond to this vulnerable population. As a human service worker, social workers take on an ethical duty to provide services to clients that will help improve the client’s quality of life (Moffat, 2011). In order to deliver the service effectively, social workers have to find programs or resources available to help those who are homeless or at risk. The availability of these resources however are very limited. With limited resources, social workers cannot provide adequate services to those in need.

Programs designed to aid the homeless have very limited resources. Agencies serve individuals depending on their needs. Those with a higher need are considered a priority and therefore served first. Thus, placing a great responsibility on the social worker, to determine who would be entitled to the resources available. When social workers make these tough decisions, it would leave them feeling hopeless and turn them cynical, to the system. They once passionately joined, causing them to be burnt out, increasing the turnaround of employees (Jezior, 2018). This would not only impact the social worker's productivity, but it will also be a disservice to the population served.

The information provided can have major implications for social work practice, both at micro and macro level. A social worker should always keep in mind the best interest of the client and find other alternatives that will help the client with their situation, which is, of course, abiding by agency rules and regulations. This is consistent with the Code of Ethics of National Association of Social Workers (NASW), which prioritizes attention to enhance both individual and societal well-being (NASW, 2021). In addition, for the macro level more collaboration needs to be done amongst social services workers and government officials to address any issues or concerns at city, county, and state level, to create enough resources in case available resources have become exhausted. Social workers play a major role in assisting the homeless, but there is much to be done in the fight to provide more resources to the most vulnerable and underprivileged populations.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research was to answer the following two questions: (1) What are contributing factors to homelessness in Southern California? (2) How can homelessness in South California be prevented? The findings from this study will serve as resources for social workers to advocate with and on behalf of the already homeless and/or those at risk of becoming homeless. In fact, when examining the homeless population, it is obvious individuals are becoming homeless at alarming rates. Homelessness in the United States is a huge social problem that is underrecognized, with 65 percent of homeless individuals found in shelters, and the other 35 percent remaining unsheltered on the streets (Council Economic Advisors [CEA], 2019).

With such high rates, it helps to conclude current policies clearly are not working. The United States has been combating homelessness for centuries and still struggles to effectively address and find effective solutions to the issue. While resources for the homeless have increased through the years, a lack of an effective plan towards addressing individual needs has not been met yet, such a plan requires attention in the plight to prevent homelessness. More has to be done to find solutions to combat homelessness before it begins. When preventative measures are taken into consideration, instead of attempting to address the problem when it already exists, social workers can then effectively deliver the services to clients who are both at risk or already homeless.

## Significance of the Project for Social Work Practice

The need to conduct this study became present with the increase of visible homeless persons living within unsheltered areas and on the streets. Identifying needs within the homeless community and advocating for the needs help social workers effectively serve the community. Research on how social workers can better serve the homeless community is still relatively new and the homeless community needs more attention. The National Homelessness Social Work Initiative identified development and policy advocacy as essential factors within the social work profession to effectively provide service needs to person(s) struggling with homelessness (as cited in Larkin et al., 2014). Within the field of social work, it is already recognized that policy and advocating for better programs is a need within the field. Ending homelessness requires strategic planning by social workers to expand their work and create larger movements meant to address homelessness. As social workers, there is a duty to help clients overcome challenging situations or obstacles to help promote self-sufficiency through meeting the basic needs of the client.

The conclusion and findings of this study can help social workers take on efforts to address homelessness by preventing and ultimately one day ending homelessness. Assessing, identifying factors that contribute to homelessness and identifying needs can help social workers advocate for essential resources the homeless community can thrive from and more importantly, need. The field of social work can then use the gathered information to reconsider qualifications for

assistance and identify what type of readily preventative resources are needed to help prevent homelessness.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### Introduction

This chapter consists of providing information regarding the contributing factors the homeless face in the United States. The subsections will include the rising cost in housing, substance abuse, and inequalities among ethnic and gender groups. The final subsection examined Conflict Theory and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Perspective, which helps create an insight on the issue with homelessness.

### Contributing Factors

On average, there are more than 600,000 people residing in unsheltered areas or in homeless shelters at night (Johnston & Kunkel, 2014). This includes sleeping in abandoned buildings, cars, and the streets; all unsheltered areas not designed for human habitation. The national goal is not just to address the issue of homelessness, but to end homelessness. While there may be numerous contributing factors to homelessness, housing, substance abuse and gender inequality are the contributing factors focused within this research.

### Housing

The lack of housing is contributed to by various components that make it close to impossible to obtain fixed housing. Such prominent components are the failures to obtain a source of steady income, not receiving enough assistance with supportive housing, and to be seen as the marginalized group in the eyes of



society. When all these components are prevalent, one can clearly begin to see that the number of families began to increase by the numbers, pushing them to find housing in shelters or going to the extremes of one entire family sleeping in the same car (Johnston & Kunkel, 2014). Also, individuals who lack a sufficient education or job training find it very difficult to earn enough money and overcome poverty. Even persons who are employed full-time and take advantage of overtime are struggling to afford housing (Johnston & Kunkel, 2014).

### Substance Abuse

Individuals who are alcohol and drug users are on the verge of becoming homeless, compared to the people who do not engage in alcohol and drug seeking behaviors (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2013). People who suffer from such addictions/behaviors are more prone to remain unemployed, making it hard to obtain income and finding decent housing (Chamberlain, Johnson, 2013). Substance and alcohol users tend to have priority on obtaining alcohol or drugs, over finding productive ways to better themselves -to make them productive citizens and prevent becoming chronic homeless. However, people with substance and drug use represent a small number in the entire homeless population (Chamberlain and Johnson, 2013). These people are misrepresented. One thing to acknowledge is that homeless and substance use and abuse have a correlation, which in turn, results in an elevated number of deaths amongst the homeless population (Doran et al., 2018). Emergency rooms are witnesses to the

admissions of homeless who suffer from alcohol intoxication and drug overdose (Doran et al., 2018).

### Gender Disparity

In the adult homeless population, 61 percent of men are high utilizers of homeless assistance programs; while 15 percent are females, 15 percent are head of households with young children, and 9 percent are adults (Martha, Burt, 2001). As for racial and ethnic groups, there is a slight difference between homeless families and adults who are not married (Burt, 2001). The proportions amongst racial groups are as follows: 40 to 41 percent are African American and White, 11 to 12 percent are Hispanics, 6 to 8 percent are Native Americans, and 1 percent are of another race (Burt, 2001). Note that the elevated representation of minority groups in the homeless population to those with permanent housing, comes from experiencing low poverty, also that homelessness is not a contributing factor to race or ethnicity (Burt, 2001).

Homeless people who reside in central cities rely on assistance programs make up 71 percent of the homeless population, while 21 percent in suburban or urban areas, and the rest, which is composed of 9 percent in rural areas (Burt, 2001). As for gender in the homeless population, male and females both experience homelessness due to different circumstances in life and situational problems. For example, females may experience homelessness due to domestic violence, evictions, early sexual abuse...etc. Men, on the other hand, experience homelessness due to being incarcerated at an early age, depriving them of

succeeding in life and obtaining a decent job to obtain decent housing. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2020), during 2019 there were 343,187 homeless males, 219,911 homeless females, 3,255 transgender, and 1,352 non-conforming gender. It is evident that males have the highest number of homelessness.

### Theory Guiding Conceptualization

Conflict theory and the Ecological perspective can be used to conceptualize the ideas in this study. Karl Marx introduced the Conflict Theory, concluding that there is ongoing conflict with the existence of society because there is competition for scarce resources (as cited in Tumin, 1953). The theory also claims that power and domination roles maintain social order, having an agreement with society or having order that is socially accepted. This framework helps to understand homelessness as an economic and political issue because those with money are powerful and benefiting from society, rather than sharing opportunities and power. The wealthy are becoming wealthier, while the poor are staying poor. The theory basically stated that there are only two classes in society, the wealthy and the “working-class”, also known as the lowest class. The theory suggests that the wealthy persons in society do not care about the best interest of the working-class, the wealthy just want to make money by any means.

Conflict Theory creates an understanding as to why homelessness in the United States is such an issue. This theory helps to understand how society does

more for those who are already wealthy, instead of focusing on what the haves can do to assist those who are struggling to meet basic needs like a home: the homeless population. Society is investing so much money and continuing to raise the cost of basic needs. This theory also helps to understand barriers in our society that are leading to homelessness. Financial impact and other impacts can have lasting effects on a person, but, as a society, there is so much room to prevent those effects.

From an ecological perspective, the issue of homelessness is understood as a result of being exposed to risky factors such as individual issues, socio-economic issues, and issues within a person's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Nooe & Patterson, 2010). This perspective uses an approach that steers away from the basic idea of why and how homelessness occurs. Instead, this perspective focuses on other contributing factors that may lead to a person becoming homeless. The perspective recognizes homelessness is not an individual issue or choice. It recognizes there are many factors that can result in a person being homeless.

The Ecological theory will help support this research by recognizing homelessness is bigger than just a person's choices. The method can help support and better understand the contributing factors explained in the subsection. Furthermore, the model will help to understand the complexity of homelessness and support the need to better serve the homeless populations.

## Summary

Conducting this study helped social workers examine what resources social workers can advocate for to better serve the already homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. In order to effectively serve the community, it is essential to recognize barriers and contributing factors that lead to the problem. The Conflict theory can help society understand how homelessness can be a result of imbalances of power. The Ecological theory on the other hand, helps to support the contributing factor and recognizes the complexity of homelessness.

## CHAPTER THREE:

### METHODS

#### Introduction

This study sought to identify needs within the homeless population and helped to explore and identify resources needed to help prevent homelessness. This chapter will contain details on how the researchers planned to conduct the actual study. The section in this chapter includes the design study, sampling, data collection and instruments, procedures, protection of human subjects, and data analysis.

#### Study Design

The purpose of this study was to identify what resources are needed among the homeless population and explore ways in which social workers can assist to better serve the homeless community. This study was an exploratory research project that sought more insight to find a better understanding with the problem of homelessness directly from those who are affected and by those social workers who have worked directly with the population. The information was gathered using a qualitative technique that includes two groups, social workers and currently homeless or who have experienced being homeless. Open-ended questions and interviews were employed for data collection.

The advantage of using an exploratory method with a qualitative approach is that it allows the researcher/s to gain information directly from the expert. In this case, the experts for this study included homeless persons themselves and social workers who have direct experience with the population. With this study, social workers will be able to identify the types of resources that are needed to help prevent homelessness and aid those who are homeless because the researchers are allowing the affected population to state exactly what it is that they need to reach self-sufficiency and obtain housing. After the needs are identified, social workers can utilize the information and advocate for the services needed.

Through this method of research, there were a few notable limitations. Since the nation was currently in a pandemic and social distancing was mandated, live interviews were limited. Some members of the groups might not have felt too comfortable conducting interviews online or through the phone. Also, with the social workers and researchers not being directly in person, the participants might withhold information to speed up the process. Lastly, researchers might have difficulties getting homeless persons to respond to all questions. In some cases, it may be difficult to try to get a hold of the homeless person due to having phone services disconnected, if the interview is going to be conducted telephonically. Therefore, in-person interactions may be most appropriate to reach homeless persons. In addition, participants might find it hard to set a time for a scheduled phone/online interview. As a result, with the limited

time frame to conclude this study, results may represent a smaller portion of the community.

### Sampling

The sample will include social workers within the researchers own network. Since these respondent groups are not chosen randomly, this study will use a non-probability purposive and snowballing technique. There will be a total of 15 participants, with two different groups of participants. One group will include 10 social workers who currently or in the past have worked directly with the homeless population. The second group will include 5 persons who were homeless or experienced homelessness in the past.

### Data Collection and Instruments

The researchers collected qualitative data utilizing questionnaires that were handed out in person or through email, each questionnaire was collected in person or by email when completed. Each group was educated regarding details/reasons of the study and the purpose it served. For social workers, demographic information such as age, gender identity, education level, and years of experience working with the homeless and in the field was collected. Information directly from the social workers aimed to identify what needs have been most prevalent among the homeless population, what limitations are present in providing resources, and what is the most notable contributing factor to homelessness according to their own experience.



For participants who have been previously or were currently homeless, questionnaires were also utilized and collected once completed. The questions included basic demographic questions, followed by questions that ask about resources and barriers among receiving services. Participants were also asked what resources they deemed most useful and about contributing factors that lead to homelessness.

### Procedures

A set of questions were created for social workers and for those who were homeless or had previously been homeless. The researchers recruited persons within their own network as participants due to the current pandemic (COVID-19). The researchers also took extreme precautions and abided by all social distancing regulations according to CDC guidelines. The participants were informed of the duration for the interview and were provided with a consent form prior to participating. Completed questionnaires were scanned and stored in an electronic password protected file where only the researchers could access. All hard copies were destroyed once scanned and in the electronic file.

### Protection of Human Subjects

To comply with California State University San Bernardino Institutional Review Board approval, the researchers were mindful of affirming the protection of the rights and privacy of all participants. The participants were informed of the purpose of the study and the right to terminate participation at any given moment since their participation was unreservedly voluntary and greatly appreciated. Any

specific information identifying the participants was not collected in the research. Therefore, the identity of each participant remained completely confidential throughout the whole process. Each participant was given a number referred to exactly by their participant number. Since the information was shared among two researchers, all documentation was kept and stored on a password-encrypted file where both researchers had access to. Participants were advised that all information be categorized as general anonymous information with the purpose of not being able to be traced back to the individual. Researchers kept the electronic protected files with questionnaires for three years.

### Data Analysis

The researchers transcribed the interview data before using thematic analysis, a popular, flexible method of data analysis for qualitative research (Clarke & Braun, 2017; Labra et al. (2019). The researchers followed the six steps proposed by Labra et al. (2019) regarding thematic analysis. These are (a) familiarizing with data, (b) generating initial codes, (c) searching for themes, (d) reviewing themes, € defining and naming themes, and (f) presenting and discussing results. Demographic data served for descriptive statistics purposes only.

## CHAPTER FOUR:

### RESULTS

#### Frequency Distributions

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the study participants. As seen in the table, the study was composed of 15 participants (N = 15). The participants were separated into two different categories: 10 who were social workers with experience working with homeless populations and 5 were individuals who were currently homeless or had experienced being homeless. In terms of race, almost half of the respondents (46.7%) identified as Hispanic-American, while the other half identified as Black (20.0%), other (20.0%), and White-non-Hispanic (13.3%). From a gender perspective, the majority (66.7%) identified as female and the rest (33.3%) identified as male.

A little over half of the study participants (53.3%) were under the age of 45 and the other half (46.7%) were over the age of 45. With regard to employment, about two thirds (73.3%) of the participants reported to be currently employed, while about one third (26.7%) reported to be unemployed. Almost half of the social workers sample (46.7%) reported having less than 10 years of experience with the homeless population while the rest of the sample (20.0%) reported having more than 10 years of experience. The majority (20%) of the participants who had experienced being homeless identified as single, whereas the others perceived themselves as married (6.7%) and widowed (6.7%).

Table 1 Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

*Demographic Characteristics of the Sample (N=15)*

Variables	N	%
<b>Participants</b>		
Social Workers	10	66.7
Homeless	5	33.3
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>		
White, non-Hispanic	2	13.3
Black	3	20.0
Hispanic American	7	46.7
Other	3	20.0
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	5	33.3
Female	10	66.7
<b>Age</b>		
Under 45	8	53.3
Over 45	7	46.7
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
Less than 10	7	46.7
10 or More	3	20.0
Missing system	5	33.3
<b>Marital status</b>		
Single	3	20.0
Married	1	6.7
Widowed	1	6.7
Missing system	10	66.7
<b>Work status</b>		
Yes	11	73.3
No	4	26.7

## Results

The goal of the study is to determine what causes homelessness in Southern California and how to prevent this phenomenon. The analysis of the data generated four major themes presented in Table 2. These were (1) many factors lead to homelessness, (2) people experiencing homelessness do use social services, (3) people experiencing homelessness face structural and personal barriers, and (4) addressing homeless requires a broad range of programs. A description of each of the themes is provided below.

Table 2 Study Major Themes

*Study Major Themes*

Themes	Description
Theme 1	Many factors lead to homelessness.
Theme 2	People experiencing homelessness do use social services.
Theme 3	People experiencing homelessness face structural and personal barriers.
Theme 4	Addressing homelessness requires a broad range of programs.

Many Factors Lead to Homelessness

This theme is about homelessness arising from more than just one factor. In fact, the study found that lack of housing, lack of work opportunities, substance use, mental health, and lack of access to services to be some of the common responses. In addition, for some participants, simply losing their job caused them to become homeless. With regard to this theme, participants stated:

*Many homeless have mental health (diagnosed or undiagnosed) and/or have substance abuse issues which makes it difficult to be able to care for their own basic needs. (Social Worker Participant)*

*There is not enough affordable housing and section 8 does not have enough availability. (Social Worker Participant)*

### People Experiencing Homelessness Do Use Social Services

Contrary to popular belief, homeless individuals do use social services. Participants who had experienced being homeless were asked what services were most beneficial and many listed more than one service. Some of these social services the study found to be commonly used by the homeless population include CalFresh, Medi-Cal, Cal Grants, unemployment benefits, General Relief programs, and residential treatment programs. CalFresh, which is a form of electronic benefits used to buy food at markets, but individuals do have to meet the federal income eligibility for benefits. Medi-Cal is a form of health insurance that also has eligibility requirements. General Relief Programs are designed to provide relief and support for indigent individuals who are not supported by their own means, but again have eligibility requirements. Unemployment benefits are provided to people who have recently lost their job due to no fault of their own, but for many individuals the weekly benefit amount is not enough to manage the continuous rising cost of living. While residential treatment programs are live-in facilities for individuals with certain disorders or mental health issues.

### People Experiencing Homelessness Face Structural and Personal Barriers

Factors such as substance use, lack of knowledge about social services, inability for social workers to stay in touch with clients, lack of availability existing resources and lack of accessibility to resources were all reported as barriers to services. With barriers such as these, it becomes difficult to offer needed resources to the population that needs them the most. This result in individuals having no choice but to live on the streets, whether for a short or extended period of time. Participants reported:

*Oftentimes clients don't know where to even begin to look for additional resources. (Social Worker Participant)*

*We struggled to reach services because we had “no bus money”.*

*Inability to maintain eligibility documents such as ID, SSC, Birth Certificate. (Homeless Participants)*

*Even though services are supposed to be centralized, often when calling to find resources for a client there is not much available since programs are full. (Social Worker Participant)*

### Addressing Homeless Requires a Broad Range of Programs

The last theme identified within the research highlighted a need for a broad range of services to address homelessness. This theme encompasses sub-themes such as affordable housing, service expansion, continuity of services, accessible services and collaboration among agencies. Participants expressed:

*The greatest need is permanent supportive housing with case management services attached to housing and emergency housing. (Social Worker Participant)*

*Addressing housing [as a way to address homelessness], there could be more fair market rent control so rent could be more affordable. (Homeless Participant)*

*More funding geared towards homeless prevention, instead of offering services once the person has already lost housing. (Homeless Participant)*

*There is a great need for supportive, long-term housing that addresses all facets of a person's life. (Social Worker Participant)*

*[...addressing homelessness] could be accomplished through the engagement of partners and key stakeholders including local churches, community volunteers, community agencies, and existing homeless services providers. (Social Worker Participant)*



## CHAPTER FIVE:

### DISCUSSION

#### Recapitulation of the Study

This study sought to explore ways to prevent homelessness in Southern California by focusing on resources social workers can advocate for to better serve the already homeless and/or those at risk of becoming homeless. This study is of paramount importance because homelessness has been a social problem that has a detrimental effect on society as a whole. Taking a qualitative approach, this study interviewed 15 participants, 10 social workers and five people living in/or having experienced homelessness. Thematic analysis yielded four themes: 1) many factors lead to homelessness, 2) people experiencing homelessness do use social services, 3) people experiencing homelessness face structural and personal barriers, and 4) addressing homeless requires a broad range of programs.

#### Consistency of the Findings with Prior Research

There have been many studies done on the homeless population that examine different factors. Those factors mostly focus on substance abuse among the homeless population, mental health issues, homelessness among youth, or homelessness among single mothers. To the researchers' knowledge, there has been little research done that focuses on what services social workers can advocate for to better serve the homeless. The findings in this study are consistent with previous research conducted by Paat et al. (2021), which found

that homeless people face many barriers to accessing services. Paat et al.'s (2021) study found that many residents were overwhelmed with difficulties in accessing services which resulted in them giving up on attempting to seek services.

#### Implications for Theory

The findings in this study reflect the premises of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Model. This model exhibits various factors that affect people at the individual level, family level, community level, and societal level. Bronfenbrenner (1979) used the terms microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem to explain the scope of these contributing factors. All four themes demonstrate that many factors contribute to homelessness. The themes also reveal that addressing homelessness requires a broad range of services. These findings therefore mirror the basic tenets of the Ecological Perspective, which focuses on the person's environment, risky factors, and socioeconomic issues (Nooe & Patterson, 2010).

#### Implications for Social Work Practice

The four themes that emerged from this study would be of great contribution to help current and future social workers at micro and macro level. Micro practice social workers have direct contact with the individual and have the ethical responsibility to protect society's most vulnerable, in this case, the homeless population or at risk of becoming homeless. However, it is important that micro social workers be aware of this study findings to understand the needs

of these unsheltered individuals, to better assist them. This study findings can also help micro social workers that work with this vulnerable population be more understanding and empathetic of their difficulties and their needs. Ultimately, micro social workers would be able to assist this population more effectively and efficiently navigate available resources.

While macro social work encompasses practices like advocating for large communities, policy analyzing, and activism. This study's findings will help macro practice social workers advocate for this vulnerable population for a large-scale social change. With this study findings, macro social would also be able to collaborate with city, county, and state workers to find solutions to prevent homelessness. Macro social workers may also be able to join lobby days and call their respective state senators, to change policies that affect the homeless population, or to implement more social service programs that would benefit this population. Housing or affordable housing being the biggest concern to address and resolve.

#### Implications for Social Work Education

This study also holds an implication for current and future social workers. It serves as a guide to raise awareness of the challenges and barriers homeless persons face so that Social Workers can better advocate for the population and serves as a guide. The findings can also be helpful to social work faculty and students in courses such as human behavior in the social environment, as the themes can help to understand that many factors contribute to homeless and

there are many structural and personal barriers homeless persons face. The study can also be significantly important in a macro practice course, considering its focus on a broad range of services needed to address homelessness. Hence, the findings in this study can inspire future social workers to advocate and bring change on a systematic level since homelessness affects a large group of people, communities, and cultures.

#### Implications for Research

This study carries meaningful implications for research. To the researchers' knowledge, this study is among the few that identify structural and personal barriers together, instead of solely focusing to pathological barriers such as mental health and substance abuse issues. In addition, this is also one of the few studies to include two different groups of Southern California participants, social workers and people in homelessness. Furthermore, this study was conducted during a pandemic. By showing that people experiencing homelessness do use social services (Theme # 2), this study contributes to the literature on homelessness in the post-pandemic era.

#### Limitations

The study contains some limitations. The first limitation is that the findings in this study only reflect a particular locality in the United States: Southern California, particularly San Bernardino and Riverside Counties. That is, this research does not represent the whole country or even other areas outside the aforementioned counties. Another limitation is that the sample size was relatively

small. However, considering the impact of COVID-19 and its restrictions, a sample size of 15 is a decent size. In addition, despite their best effort, the researchers could not prevent potential biases with a qualitative methodology. Lastly, the study was composed of mostly Hispanic participants. This is understandable, given that San Bernardino and Riverside Counties are Hispanic dominant areas.

### Recommendations

Future research should address the limitations in this study. First, a replication of this study in a new geographical area should be conducted. That can also include a statewide study or a study all across the US for even stronger implications. Additionally, future researchers should also make an effort to recruit more than 15 participants. Using a quantitative approach or a more rigorous method is also recommended for a stronger finding. Furthermore, it is recommended that future research recruit more diverse individuals, such those who identify as Native Americans, Black, and members of the LGBTQ+ community.

APPENDIX A  
SOCIAL WORKER QUESTIONS

Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Race: \_\_\_\_\_

How many years' experience do you have working in social services?

In your experience what are the major needs of homeless clients you encounter?

What barriers do your clients face in accessing social services/resources?

What are the barriers you face when assisting the homeless?

Do you think more should be done to assist the homeless? If so, what do you think?

What do you think would prevent homelessness?

Survey created by: Esmeralda Arellano and Briana Sanchez

APPENDIX B

THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN/ARE HOMELESS QUESTIONS



Gender: \_\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Race: \_\_\_\_\_

Marital status: \_\_\_\_\_

Currently employed? Yes or No

What was the main cause that led to you becoming homeless?

What social service/community partnership programs did you benefit most from?

Which resources do you think you have been most successful with?

What difficulties/barriers did you experience when seeking social services/resources?

Do you feel if more resources were available, it would have prevented you from becoming homeless?

Survey created by: Esmeralda Arellano and Briana Sanchez

APPENDIX C  
INFORMED CONSENT

The study in which you are asked to participate is designed to what resources social workers can advocate for to better serve the already homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The study is being conducted by graduate students Esmeralda Arellano and Briana, under the supervision of Dr. Rigaud Joseph, Assistant 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 this study is to examine what resources social workers can advocate for to better serve the already homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

**DESCRIPTION:** Social Worker participants will be asked of a few questions pertaining to demographics, as well as questions pertaining to what they have seen as possible barriers in resources, contributing factors to homelessness, and resources that have been identified as major needs among homeless. Individuals who have experienced homeless will be asked demographic questions, as well as questions about what factors contributed to their homeless experience, what resources were most beneficial, and their experience and barriers faced when attempting to receive resources.

**PARTICIPATION:** Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. As a participant, you have the right to refuse participation at any point in the study, skip questions, and or withdrawal at any point. There are no consequences.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** All responses will remain confidential and all information obtained will be reported at a group. No identifiable information will be used to report any results. The interviews used in this research will be voice recorded and given a number, no names will be used to maintain confidentiality.

**DURATION:** It will take about 20 mins to complete the survey and interview.

**RISKS:** There are no foreseen risk associated with this study. However, there may be some non-anticipated uneasiness in answering some of the questions. For that reason, each participant can choose to skip any question or stop the research at any point.

**BENEFITS:** There are no individual benefits to the study, rather the research will help benefit social workers as a whole to better serve the homeless population.

**CONSENT:** By providing a phone number and/or email, you consent as a participant to have your responses used and/or voice interviews recorded, unless you chose to withdrawal from the study.

**CONTACT:** Any questions or concerns directly related to the study can be addressed by Dr. Joseph at (909) 537-5507.

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

APPENDIX D  
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

Reply Delete Junk Block sender

## IRB-FY2021-140 - Initial: IRB Admin./Exempt Review Determination Letter

May 3, 2021

### CSUSB INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Administrative/Exempt Review Determination

Status: Determined Exempt

IRB-FY2021-140

Rigaud Joseph Esmeralda Arellano, Briana Sanchez  
CSBS - Social Work  
California State University, San Bernardino  
5500 University Parkway  
San Bernardino, California 92407

Dear Rigaud Joseph Esmeralda Arellano, Briana Sanchez:

Your application to use human subjects, titled ""Homelessness in Southern California: A Look toward Prevention"" has been reviewed and determined exempt by the Chair of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of CSU, San Bernardino. An exempt determination means your study had met the federal requirements for exempt status under 45 CFR 46.104. The CSUSB IRB has not evaluated your proposal for scientific merit, except to weigh the risk and benefits of the study to ensure the protection of human participants. Important Note: 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 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Visit the Office of Academic Research website for more information at <https://www.csusb.edu/academic-research>.

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. The forms (modification, renewal, unanticipated/adverse event, study closure) are located in the Cayuse IRB 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. The Cayuse IRB system will notify you when your protocol is due for renewal. Ensure you file your protocol renewal and continuing review form through the Cayuse IRB system to keep your protocol current and active unless you have completed your study.

**Important Notice: For all in-person research following IRB approval all research activities must be approved through the Office of Academic Research by filling out the [Project Restart and Continuity Plan](#).**

- Ensure your CITI Human Subjects Training is kept up-to-date and current throughout the study.
- Submit a protocol modification (change) if any changes (no matter how minor)

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## ASSIGNED RESPONSIBILITIES

As a team, both researchers worked collaboratively and shared all responsibilities. The work was divided equally and researched and communicated regularly to discuss each section. Researchers worked together to identify participants and reach out to each person. Esmeralda took on the role of setting time frames and deadlines for work to ensure all data is collected in a timely manner. Briana took on the role to make sure all information was inputted correctly by the deadline and that all documents and information was stored on a password protected electronic file.