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A needs assessment of the homeless and the lack of affordable housing programs for the homeless

Susan Carol Parks

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A NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF THE HOMELESS AND THE LACK OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROGRAMS FOR THE 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
Susan Carol Parks
December 2007
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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study explored, through face-to-face in-depth interviews, the perceptions and attitudes of experts on housing issues of the homeless population, in order to find out how this situation could be addressed.

Eight experts were interviewed within the Inland Empire at emergency shelters and missions located in San Bernardino, Riverside, and Victorville. This study might give insight of the need for additional affordable housing programs, within the Inland Empire, by educating social service providers about the needs of the homeless, locally.

Based upon the findings of this study, it would benefit social workers working with the homeless populations' housing issues to do an assessment of those homeless clients' individual and family needs.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my research advisor, Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, and my writing advisor, Katharine Peake for their guidance, encouragement, and support throughout this study. I would also like to thank Dr. Davis for his guidance at the birth of this research project. Many thanks to the social workers, directors, administrators, case managers, and pastors that took the time to participate in this study, because without their participation, this study could not have been done.
DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family, friends, professors and everyone else who helped to encourage and support me throughout my educational experience at CSUSB.

Thank you all for your patience and guidance, which has helped to make this study a successful endeavor.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One presents an overview of the project. This was a qualitative study. Face-to-face, in-depth, interviews were conducted with experts on homelessness, to find out what could be done for the homeless, locally.

Problem Statement

Housing is a basic human need. However, there are barriers that appear insurmountable to homeless individuals and families (Changemakers, 2006) including the lack of affordable housing units.

According to the American Journal of Public Health (2002), the lack of affordable housing is not only a burden to many of the poor, but it is harmful to the larger society as well because of the adverse effects of inadequate housing on public health.

Homeless families comprise approximately 40% of the homeless population (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 1993). According to Killion (1988; 1995; 1998) and Stark (1992) most of the heads of households of these families are females, ranging in age from 20 to 35, and have minimal social support from friends and/or family. They typically
lack vocational training, job experience, and child-care services, and have little knowledge of how to navigate the educational and healthcare systems or any other social service agencies (Killion et al., 1998). The inadequacy or non-availability of affordable housing has a negative impact on the quality of life for families and can have devastating effects on their health. Moreover, the developmental impact of homelessness on children is pervasive, severe, and cumulative (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990, pp. 347-362; Wagner & Menke, 1992, pp. 65-71).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to interview the social workers that work with the homeless population within the Inland Empire, and to explore their perceptions of and attitudes about the homeless population.

It is hoped that this research project will initiate further research into the perceived needs of the homeless. There is an abundance of literature on the expressed needs of the homeless population, as well as the causes of homelessness. However, there is very
limited information about what can be done for the increasing population of homeless people that live on the streets, within the Inland Empire.

Significance of the Project for Social Work

The significance of this research project for social work was to understand the lack of housing for the homeless, and to find out what can be done to provide housing for the homeless locally.

Experts agree that the increasing homeless population is due to a combination of macro level factors, such as poverty, lack of employment, low social welfare wages, lack of affordable housing, and personal vulnerability (e.g., childhood abuse/neglect, mental health symptoms, impoverished support networks, and substance abuse) (Morrell-Bellai, Goering, & Boydell, 2000, pp. 594-600). This project sought insight into the need for additional housing programs. It was further hoped that this project would initiate further studies into how to best meet the housing needs of the homeless population within the Inland Empire (San Bernardino, Riverside, and Victorville).
Therefore, this project was a qualitative study, to explore, assess, and evaluate available housing services within the cities of San Bernardino, Riverside, and Victorville by conducting in-depth, face-to-face interviews with eight experts on homelessness, in order to find out what can be done for the homeless within the Inland Empire.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter will review research studies and relevant literature on homelessness and some of the inherent barriers that exist that prevent the homeless from exiting homelessness.

Historical Overview of Poverty and Social Welfare

The American welfare system dates back to Elizabethan England, when public obligation to assist the poor was codified into what were known as the Poor Laws (Cammisa, 1998, pp. 25-59). Homelessness was not tolerated. The Poor Laws declared homeless people to be criminals and vagrants who were up to no good (Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 2006). The National Coalition for the Homeless (2003) found that there still are municipal ordinances that criminalize homelessness (i.e., vagrancy, and loitering). Instead of providing livable wages and affordable housing, some communities choose to protect themselves from visible homelessness by disguising the ordinance as a public safety issue and enforcing quality of life codes.
In the 1930s, the underlying assumption of welfare was that it was a structural problem that required governmental assistance (Cammisa, 1998, pp. 97-9). The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996 stresses the role of individual and personal responsibility in alleviating poverty (Cammisa, 1998). Cammisa (1998) says "poor means not having enough money, but how much money is enough?" (p. 98)

Brueggemann (2006, pp. 379-86) and Cammisa (1998, pp. 97-9) explain how the welfare system was created during the Great Depression through the New Deal. During the 1960s, the social welfare system became the War on Poverty, also known as The Great Society. In 1980, the Mental Health Systems Act was passed. This Act would have provided additional resources for community-based services. However, the Act was repealed by the Reagan administration. Block grants were given to states for mental health, alcohol and drug abuse programs. More recently, these public supports have been revised and devolved into the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, and the Temporary
Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) block grants that were created by welfare reform.

During the late 1980s and early 1990s, and in response to the lack of affordable housing, homeless families took steps to raise awareness of their dire needs for affordable housing (Snow, Soule, & Cress, 2005, p. 1183). Allies and supporters of the homeless coalition engaged in protest rallies, marches, housing takeovers, and encampments on government property to express their collective grievances about the lack of affordable housing programs. Then, in 1989, more than 250,000 homeless individuals and their supporters marched on Washington, D.C. and demanded affordable housing under the banner of Housing Now! (Snow, Soule, & Cress, 2005, pp. 1184-1201).

As a result of this collective action, by the homeless population, the federal government created programs to address demands for affordable housing (Journal of Housing, 2005; Housing Authority, 2004) by dispersing a record $1.4 billion in grants for homeless programs. A Brookings Institute report (2005) claims that an estimated 154.9 million low cost housing units will be
built by the year 2030, which is a dramatic increase from the 115.9 million residential units built in 2000.

Demographics of the Homeless

America's homeless population increased dramatically during the 80s, when mental health institutions closed their doors and discharged their populations into local communities (American Journal of Public Health, 2002). Additionally, the Journal of Public Health (2002) claims that most residents of the mental health institutions were not trained how to manage their monthly budgets and, therefore, the discharged residents ended up homeless and on the streets.

According to the American Journal of Public Health (2005), the homeless population includes a high proportion of former prisoners due to the fact that imprisonment may actually precipitate homelessness by decreasing employment and housing prospects (Kushel et al., 2005, pp. 174-7).

Homeless families comprise approximately 40% of the homeless population (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 1993; Encyclopedia of Social Work, 1990, 18th ed.). Killion (1988; 1995; 1998) and Stark (1992) found that most heads
of households of these homeless families are females, who range in age from 20 to 35, and who basically have very limited social support from friends or family. The homeless female heads of households typically lack vocational training, job experience, child-care services, and have little knowledge of how to navigate the educational and healthcare systems or any other social service agencies (Killion et al., 1998).

**Housing**

Housing is a basic need. However, there are barriers that appear to be insurmountable to homeless individuals and to homeless families (Changemakers, 2006).

Substandard housing, as well as the lack of affordable housing programs, has a negative impact on the quality of life for the increasing population of homeless families (Harrison, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990, 347-362). Moreover, the developmental impact of homelessness on children is pervasive, severe, and cumulative (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990, 347-62; Wagner & Menke, 1992, pp. 65-71).

The Second Edition (2004) of The Index Directory of Federal Domestic Assistance Programs reports that the
Housing Authority of the County of San Bernardino was organized in 1941, under the U.S. Housing Act of 1937, and under the State of California Housing Authorities Law of 1938. It further states that the California Housing Authority has grown to become one of the largest public agencies in the United States. Additionally, the Housing Authority of San Bernardino County states that the Section 8 (assisted housing program) was established in 1974 by the Housing and Community Development Act. Section 8 is a Federally funded program which provides rental assistance, in the form of a voucher to very low income families, for the purpose of securing decent affordable housing. Included in this social welfare package is the Shelter Plus Care Program, which was designed to contribute to the countywide public and private partnership system in order to strengthen the services available to homeless and very poor individuals and families.

In the Consolidated Plan for Housing and Community Development (2005), HUD has considered a more realistic definition of a workable affordable housing program in order to deliver adequate housing to those in need of
reasonably priced residential units under the guidelines of the Housing Authority and HUD (Section 8).

According to Robinson (1997, p. 7), the lack of affordable units increases the number of homeless families that remain homeless. Additionally, social scientists and researchers hypothesized that there might be a link between institutional disaffiliation, personal disabilities, acculturation to the homeless lifestyle, and why some homeless individuals choose to remain homeless (Piliavin, Wright, Mare, & Westerfelt, 1996, pp. 34-38; Dworsky & Piliavin, 2000, p. 209). Furthermore, Robinson (1997) found that emergency shelters do no more than offer a quick fix to "remedy homelessness" (p. iii). Atkinson (1996, p. 9), and Shinn, Knickman, Ward, Petrovic, Muth, Snow, and Anderson (1993, p. 231) also found that shelters do no more than "help the homeless endure life on the street rather than escape it" (p. 46).

Lack of existing housing programs, emergency shelters, and private or public agencies that offer services to the homeless population, in Victorville, Riverside, and San Bernardino, is due to a combination of macro level factors, such as poverty, lack of employment,
low social welfare benefits, lack of affordable housing, and personal vulnerabilities (e.g., childhood abuse/neglect, mental health symptoms, impoverished support networks, and substance abuse) (Morrell-Bellai, Goering, & Boydell, 2000, pp. 594-600).

The Institute for the Study of Homelessness and Poverty (2004) claims that approximately 42 to 77% of homeless people do not request or receive public benefits. The National Coalition for the Homeless (2003) claims that there is a serious lack of emergency housing and services to accommodate the increasing homeless population. Weinreb, Rossi (1995) and Robinson (1997) have found that family shelters outnumber all other shelters by 39% (pp. 86-107). Many homeless emergency shelters charge from $5 to $10 for a bed or a mat on the floor for one night. According to additional studies by the U.S. Conference of Mayors (2003), requests from homeless individuals for emergency housing and shelter have risen more than 13%, and requests from homeless families have risen more than 15% in one year.

The U.S. Conference of Mayors (2003) further reports that with the increases in homeless needing emergency housing and shelters, more than 33% of homeless families
are being turned away from overcrowded shelters. Further, according to the Institute for the Study of Homelessness and Poverty (2004), there are more than 42% of homeless people that never request or receive public benefits.

Wright (1989) intimates that there might be a breakdown in communication between public and private agencies, because there appear to be underutilized resources, and that there is a need to develop a more centralized system, in order for these resources to become more accessible to the homeless population that need these public benefits.

Income and Housing Costs

According to the Census (2000), the estimated population of Victorville is 64,029 and has a median family income of $36,187. The per capita income ranges from a low of $8,850 to a high of $20,561. The median price of a 5.9 room house, in Victorville, in 2000 was estimated to be about $95,600. The estimated population of San Bernardino (Census, 2000) was 185,401 with a median family income of $33,357 per annum. Housing Facts, Figures and Trends (2006), which is produced by the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), the
National Association of Realtors, and Wells Fargo Bank is used primarily as a marketing index. NAHB, in their March 2006 report, estimated that the median price of an existing single-family dwelling was $208,700, and that the average existing home sales price for a single-family dwelling was $257,500, within San Bernardino/Riverside counties.

Furthermore, according to the U.S. Census (2000), the national poverty level of California ranks at sixteenth when the cost of housing is not included. However, once the cost of housing is included in the measurement, then California ranks as number three.

Recently released data from both the 1999 American Housing Survey and the 2000 Census, found that substandard housing and residential overcrowding within California far surpasses any other state. California has more than 1.7 million overcrowded households (Fannie Mae Foundation, 2002), and five Southern California counties (Los Angeles, Orange, San Diego, San Bernardino, and Riverside) account for 1.1 million overcrowded households.
Theories Guiding Conceptualization

Using Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Zastrow, & Kirst-Ashman, 2004, pp. 389-91), homeless people are most concerned about meeting their basic human needs which include the universal necessities of adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter, and healthcare (Hepworth, Rooney, & Larsen, 2002, p. 204). Since the homeless are unable to even partially meet their physiological, safety, belongingness and love, and self-esteem needs, they are therefore unable to strive to meet the needs of the final level, self-actualization. The National Coalition for the Homeless (2003) argues that people who are homeless are surviving at the bottom of humanity.

According to Robinson (1997), and Atkinson and Riech (1996), there are only a small percentage of homeless individuals and families that connect with a structured shelter, exit homelessness, or have their basic human needs met.

This study will utilize ecosystems theory, which according to Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004, pp. 7-11), is the merging of systems theory with an ecological perspective. People are in a constant interaction within their environment. Therefore, social workers working with
the homeless population must work at improving the interactions between their clients and the systems or programs available to the homeless population (Zastrow & Kirst-Ashman, 2004). This study will analyze and assess what gaps or lack in resources or funding exists (Grinnell & Unrau, 2005).

Grinnell and Unrau (2005, p. 455) claim that when considering any social problem, the researcher must differentiate between perceived and expressed needs. Perceived needs are the opinions of experts in the field, whereas, expressed needs are those of the people who use the social services (p. 455). Grinnell (2005) suggests that it is useful to include both perceived and expressed needs when conducting a needs assessment. However, this qualitative study of experts' perceptions and attitudes on homelessness will only assess and analyze the perceived needs of the experts who work with the homeless population within this research project.

Summary

In summary, this chapter presented an overview of the Poor Laws of Elizabethan England, through the New Deal, the Great Society, and the Personal Responsibility
and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996. According to the abundant literature on homelessness and housing, the per capita income, within the Inland Empire, ranges from a low of $8,850 to a high of $20,561, whereas, the prices for housing have risen to astronomical proportions. Since the prices of real property have risen from $95,000, in 2000, to more than $200,000, in 2006, that may be the reason why there is a lack of affordable housing and emergency shelters available to the homeless population located within the Inland Empire (i.e., San Bernardino, Riverside, and Victorville). Therefore, this study will assess the perceptions and attitudes of experts that work with the homeless locally, to find out what more can be done for the homeless within the Inland Empire.
CHAPTER THREE
METHODS

Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methods that were used to obtain and analyze data in this study. The topics addressed are the study design, sampling methods, data collection, interview questionnaire instrument, and procedures of analysis.

Study Design

The purpose of this study was to interview experts on housing programs for the homeless in order to better understand homelessness, and to find out if additional housing may be appropriate for the homeless, locally. Experts that work in the field at local emergency temporary shelters and missions located in Victorville, Riverside, and San Bernardino, California were interviewed.

The practical methodological limitations of this study included developing a questionnaire that explored and accurately assessed the experts’ perceptions and attitudes of homelessness. It was further hoped that the data collected would expose the limitations that are
inherent within the existing services and programs. Qualitative, face-to-face in-depth interviews allowed the professionals who work in the trenches to share their perceptions of what is needed to best serve their clients' housing needs.

Sampling

For the purpose of this study, a qualitative instrument (a questionnaire) was used in order to explore experts' attitudes and perceptions about homelessness. This method allowed for in-depth, face-to-face interviews with eight experts who work with the homeless population at various emergency shelters and missions located in Victorville, Riverside, and San Bernardino, California.

This researcher networked with the administrators, directors, case managers, social workers, and pastors affiliated with emergency shelters, missions, and outreach programs (i.e., the American Legion, and County Missions) located within the Inland Empire (e.g., Victorville, Riverside and San Bernardino). This researcher was referred to two social workers that work with the homeless population in the Inland Empire. One social worker has worked with the homeless population for
more than twenty years. The second social worker has worked with the homeless population for more than three years. Many scheduled interviews took place in the offices of administrators, directors, managers, and social workers, at various emergency shelters and missions located within Victorville, Riverside, and San Bernardino. Some scheduled interviews took place at the university campus, while a few interviews took place at the homeless sites. Scheduled interviews were conducted during the winter quarter of 2007.

Data Collection and Instruments

The instrument was a questionnaire and took a maximum of twenty minutes per interviewee. The following questions were asked of each expert: What are the demographics of the homeless population that you serve? What are your perceptions of the needs of the homeless population that you serve? In your opinion, are there adequate and accessible programs that will provide affordable housing units, healthcare services, day-care services, and educational services to the homeless population? How do homeless families with small children cope? Is your facility able to place homeless families
into permanent housing units? If so, what are the requirements for the applicants? If not, what happens to the families who need housing? Does your facility refer its clients to other social service programs? How are these referrals made? What happens to the homeless client if the client is illiterate, mentally or physically challenged, or is in need of rehabilitation for substance abuse? Does anyone follow-up with the client?

Procedures

The data were taken from the face-to-face, in-depth interviews with experts on homelessness by means of a questionnaire. The interviews took place, on site, at the agency, or at the university library. All handwritten notes were transcribed and entered into the Atlas TI database. To ensure confidentiality, only the researcher and her supervisor had access to all the confidential data collected. All questionnaires were placed in a secure box with a lock. Once the data analysis was completed, the original questionnaires were destroyed.
Protection of Human Subjects

Contact was made with the program directors, facilitators, and administrators of emergency shelters located in Victorville, and San Bernardino.

The informed consent (see Appendix B) stated that this study was voluntary and allowed all participants to withdraw at any time without penalty. One copy of the informed consent was placed with the handwritten notes in a locked box. The second copy of the informed consent was given to the interviewee. Every participant was debriefed (see Appendix C). If the participant had any concerns or questions regarding this study, then they were directed to contact the research supervisor.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data was collected from eight face-to-face in-depth interviews. All handwritten notes were transcribed. Then the notes were analyzed using Atlas TI.

Summary

This chapter has reviewed the research methods that were used in this study of the perceptions and attitudes of experts on homelessness, in order to find out what
more could be done for the homeless within the Inland Empire. This chapter has discussed what techniques were used to collect and analyze the data for this study. Additionally, this chapter has addressed various precautions that were taken to protect human subjects involved with the data collection, and to honor any requests for anonymity from administrators, facilitators, case managers and program directors who had agreed to an interview but wished to remain anonymous.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter will present the results of this qualitative study of experts' perceptions and attitudes about housing for the homeless within the Inland Empire (i.e., Victorville, San Bernardino, and Riverside). The demographics of the participants and their clients will also be presented.

Presentation of the Findings

This qualitative study interviewed eight local experts on homelessness within the Inland Empire (i.e., Victorville, San Bernardino, and Riverside). The eight participants were composed of four males (2 Blacks, 2 Whites) and four females (1 Hispanic, 2 Whites, 1 Black).

One pastor is a Black middle-aged man who has worked with the homeless population, in the city of San Bernardino, for more than five years. The second pastor is a White male in his mid to late thirties who said he worked with the homeless population, in the Victor Valley, for more than four years.
One administrator, a White male in his fifties, said he had worked with the homeless population for more than eleven years in the Victor Valley. In the same mission, a youthful looking Black male said he worked with the homeless population for more than four years.

The manager of the emergency shelter, in Victorville, is a fifty-year old Hispanic female who said she worked with the homeless population for more than seven years. She said she hoped to return to school and become a social worker. The executive director of the emergency shelter, in Victorville, is a Black middle-aged female who said she worked with the homeless population for about ten years at this time, and claimed that it was both rewarding and frustrating.

Both the social worker and the case manager are White. However, the social worker is approaching sixty-years of age, and said she worked with the homeless population for a little more than twenty-two years, while the case manager is in her early thirties and said she worked with the homeless population for a little more than three years. These two White females work in Riverside, and were very honest and open about their
frustration with the existing homeless and housing programs.

All participants had worked with the homeless for more than three years, and they all had some college education or had a college degree.

The associate program director, the coordinator of emergency services, and the administrator of the local mission stated that, "Basically, the homeless missions within the high desert are an outreach resource program. According to the administrator and the coordinator of emergency services, the missions in Victorville and San Bernardino are not shelters; these agencies are a referral service only. They claim that there are not enough resources to house the homeless within the Inland Empire. Additionally, they stated that most local homeless agencies couldn’t afford to hire social workers to assess the needs of the homeless. Therefore, there is very little follow-up with those seeking social services from the local missions.

According to the manager of the only emergency shelter located within the high desert that is licensed to house the homeless, said that, although, the community is generous, she believes that if each person were to
donate one dollar a month, then, the shelter would have more than enough resources to run the facility efficiently.

The executive director is also the grant writer and main fundraiser for the emergency shelter. It is very difficult to get the needed funding, because as the manager stated, “San Bernardino County is not considered to be as important as Los Angeles County when state and federal funds are distributed. We get the smaller piece of pie.” The director and manager stated that it takes a minimum of $37,000 per month to run this facility. The manager of the shelter stated that all their clients are referrals, and a majority (90%) of their referrals are young single moms who have been thrown out of the family home. Families that are housed within this temporary shelter must seek employment, open a bank account, and locate permanent housing within 140 days, whereas, single individuals must seek employment and vacate the shelter within thirty days. This shelter does not provide any child-care services, or vocational training. These are the bureaucratic and licensing resource problems and issues that most local non-profit and governmental social service agencies must deal with everyday, according to
the director and manager of this high desert emergency shelter.

A pastor affiliated with various non-profit outreach agencies claimed that there are a lot of veterans who have fallen through the cracks.

According to the pastor, there are more than 800 homeless people living near the 5th Street Park. He says that they are about 30% Whites, 30% Blacks, 30% Hispanics, and the remaining 10% are a mixture of Asian and indigenous peoples. About 50% are adults and 50% are children.

Two pastors said they have no housing referral services, no child-care services, and do not have a license to do any more than assist the homeless in getting food, clothing, and spiritual help from their churches.

One pastor claimed that there is a lack of available shelters or units for homeless individuals that are not eligible for established programs (e.g., mental health, rehabilitation, disability, or welfare).

Another pastor joined forces with the American Legion, in San Bernardino, to assist the homeless veterans and their families deal with the bureaucratic
red tape, in order for them to exit homelessness, and to receive the benefits that they should be receiving.

One social worker said she was employed as the coordinator and administrator of the Riverside County Community Action Committee and Department of Public Social Services (DPSS). She reported that more than 50% of her clients were families, and the remainder (50%) of homeless clients were former convicts (single mothers who had given birth while in prison). According to the social worker, all homeless individuals need to be accurately assessed, which rarely happens. Additionally, this social worker said that there needs to be a working program that follows its clients, and a program that has a good referral system in place, especially for people being released from jail or prison.

Furthermore, the social worker also claimed that since a large proportion of homeless are families, then it makes sense that there should be child-care services available to homeless families. The social worker adamantly stated that there needed to be educational opportunities for the homeless to enhance their vocational skills.
Additionally, social workers need to do assessments to determine what it is that each homeless client needs in order for them to move on to the next level. There also needed to be available resources and programs. At the present time, there is very little follow-up with the homeless population within the Inland Empire.

A case manager said she worked with a homeless outreach agency in Riverside. All of her homeless clients are mentally ill, over 18 years of age, and single. The case manager said that her clients are 40% African American, 30% Latino, and the remaining 30% are White. The case manager said that there are no services for people who do not fit into the guidelines of programs that are available. This case manager said that a major need is that there are no preventative services or programs. And another major issue, according to the case manager is that there is no flexibility in housing options. The case manager ended her session with this statement, “There are open doors of opportunities, however, these doors are very narrow.”

The administrator and pastor affiliated with a non-profit outreach agency said that their agency offers services to a very diverse ethnic population consisting
of about 80% males ranging in age from 17 to 65, and still living on the streets. The remaining 20% are females, and of this 20%, about 10% are married. If the married couples are accepted into the outreach program, they are not allowed to sleep together or to have sex. According to the administrator, all applicants are screened because this agency offers services to a large population of former convicts and drug addicts. No predators or sexual deviants are allowed to participate in this outreach rehabilitation program. However, this agency does offer free showers, food, clothing, and bible study to those homeless individuals that wish to remain on the streets.

A pastor, social worker, case manager, and director of a mission in San Bernardino, claimed that they do extensive initial assessments of their homeless clients' individual needs, and that they do follow-up with evaluations to determine satisfaction with the services received by their homeless clients. However, this is a therapeutic community only. All clients must adhere to very strict rules. All the males are housed in one building, and females with children are housed in another building.
Summary

The results of this study exposed the lack of programs for the homeless (i.e., day-care, healthcare, education, employment, and housing) within the Inland Empire. Six of the eight experts (75%) stated that since most governmental and non-profit agencies that offer services to the homeless population, located within the Inland Empire, do not receive the large grants that are allotted to L.A. County. Since local agencies are unable to hire social workers, the individual needs of the homeless population are not addressed. Likewise, these agencies are not able to follow-up with any of their homeless clients.

The consensus of all the participants was that instead of agencies developing programs to meet the needs of the local homeless population, the individuals within the local homeless population had to fit within existing state and federal programs.
CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will discuss the results of this qualitative study, and some of the limitations and biases that are inherent within any qualitative study (that deals with the housing needs of the homeless population, whether this population lives on the streets or in temporary shelters). Additionally, this chapter will present suggestions and recommendations for social work practice, policy, and research.

Discussion

This study found that although there is an abundance of research and literature about the causes of homelessness, there is a lack of information about how this county will implement the President's proposal to eliminate and terminate homelessness by the year 2010 (Grzeskowiak, 2005). Many of the expert participants (pastors, case managers, administrators, and directors) in this study thought that eliminating or terminating homelessness was very good in theory, but not very realistic. As the executive director and manager of the
only homeless shelter located in the high desert asserted, the Inland Empire does not receive an equal allocation of available state and federal funds that Los Angeles and a few other cities receive for their homeless populations. Therefore, the services that are available to the homeless population within the Inland Empire are very limited. Furthermore, missions and outreach agencies scattered throughout the high desert are no more than referral or resource centers for the homeless population.

One social worker that was interviewed stated that all housing issues must go through HUD, and that the homeless were not their priority. This statement supports the findings of the National Coalition for the Homeless (2003) that claimed that there is a serious lack of emergency housing and services to accommodate the increasing homeless population. This statement is further supported by Wright’s (1989) findings concerning a breakdown in communication between public and private agencies, because there appear to be underutilized resources, and that there is a need to develop a more centralized system. The reasoning behind a more centralized system would be to make these resources more accessible to the homeless population that needs these
public benefits. Furthermore, the U.S. Conference of Mayors (2003) reports that more than 33% of homeless families are being turned away from overcrowded shelters, and these shelters provide only for emergency or temporary housing.

The expert participants in this study agreed with other social scientists that found that the lack of housing for the homeless is due to a combination of macro level factors, such as poverty, lack of employment and livable wages, low social welfare benefits, lack of affordable housing, and personal vulnerabilities (e.g., substance abuse, incarceration, and mental health symptoms) (Morrell-Bellai, Goering, & Boydell, 2000, pp. 594-600).

While interviewing this study’s experts, most participants asked, “How can a homeless person be eligible for a home under Section 8 if he/she doesn’t have a job that pays a livable wage?” Many of this study’s expert participants also stated that according to the HUD (Section 8) guidelines, the individual must show his or her income, via the income tax return, for a minimum of five years. Two administrators said that,
“Most of the clients that require service from this agency don't have anything, they live from day to day.”

One director stated that the costs of securing an available apartment were prohibitive within the high desert, and further stated that the waiting list for a low-cost Section 8 apartment was more than five years. This statement is further supported by the Census (2000), Housing Facts, Figures, and Trends (2006), and Fannie Mae Foundation (2002) that found that the cost of a single family dwelling, in the high desert, had risen more than 57% within a six-year period. In addition, adequate rental units have also risen to an all-time high of $750 per month in the high desert for a 2-bedroom apartment, and rental units are expected to climb to at least $1200 per month for an adequate 2-bedroom apartment.

Limitations

This study was limited by the small sample size as well as the time constraints of less than ten weeks. There is a possibility that some of the participants within this study might have been biased and might have given answers that they thought might help their cause, which is also inherent of a qualitative study.
Since homelessness and housing the homeless are due to a combination of macro level factors, such as livable wages and affordable housing (The National Coalition for the Homeless, 2003; Morrell-Bellai, Goering, & Boydell, 2000), further research is needed to address each of the macro issues if the President’s recommendation to eliminate homelessness will ever be realized (Grzeskowiak, 2005).

Recommendations for Social Work Practice, Policy and Research

Based upon the findings of this study, it would benefit social workers working with the homeless populations’ housing issues to do an assessment of those homeless clients’ individual and family needs. According to many of this study’s participants’ responses, most agencies located within the Inland Empire lack the funding to operate effectively. These agencies serve merely as referral services. One possible source of additional funding could be explored if social workers would consider doing grant writing for homeless agencies located within the Inland Empire.

As far as policy issues, it would be beneficial for the Inland Empire and the homeless population if the
Policy makers would advocate for additional funds to be allocated to the Inland Empire in order to accommodate the housing needs of the local homeless population. These agencies located within the Inland Empire (e.g., the high desert, San Bernardino, and Riverside) that offer services to the homeless population need to develop both a more centralized system, and better programs in order to meet the needs of the homeless (e.g., vocational training, day care, health care, and housing).

Additional research needs to be done on the existing programs and delivery of social services for the homeless population. More data can be accrued and assessed from the experts who work with the homeless population within the Inland Empire so that more homeless people can be helped. More research could be done regarding the lack of affordable housing and to find out what more can be done to prevent any further increases to the homeless population.

Conclusions

The consensus of the expert-participants is that their agencies lack the funding and licensing to do any
more than "help the homeless endure life on the street, rather than escape it" (Shinn et al., 1993, p. 46).

According to the participants of this qualitative study of their perceptions and attitudes about homelessness, the homeless agencies located within the Inland Empire need to implement initial assessments of their clients' needs, and to have some form of evaluation and follow-up of how well these programs meet these needs.

Furthermore, this study suggests the need for more social workers to work within the agencies that deliver or offer services to the homeless population.

And finally, this researcher further suggests that there needs to be better communication, coordination and collaboration between homeless agencies, to meet the diverse needs of the homeless population in the Inland Empire (e.g., mental health, substance abuse, victims of domestic violence, and AIDS).
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE
QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What are the demographics of the homeless population that you serve?

2. What are your perceptions of the needs of the homeless population that you serve?

3. In your opinion, are there adequate and accessible programs that will provide affordable housing units, healthcare services, day-care services, and educational services to the homeless population?

4. How do homeless families with small children cope?

5. Is your facility able to place homeless families into permanent housing units? If so, what are the requirements for the applicants? If not, what happens to the families who need housing?

6. Does your facility refer its clients to other social service programs? How are these referrals made?

7. What happens to the homeless client if the client is illiterate, mentally or physically challenged, or is in need of rehabilitation for substance abuse? Does anyone follow-up with the client?
APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT
Informed Consent

The study in which you are being asked to participate is designed to interview experts on homelessness to find out what can be done for the homeless. This study is being conducted by Susan Carol Parks under the supervision of Dr. Rosemary McCaslin, Professor of graduate studies in the MSW program at California State University, San Bernardino. This study has been approved by the Dept. of Social Work Institutional Review Board Subcommittee, California State University, San Bernardino.

In this study you will be asked in a face-to-face interview to address questions about the homeless population that you serve to find out what can be done for the homeless, which should take about 10 to 20 minutes to complete. All of your responses will be held in the strictest of confidence by the researchers. Your name will not be reported with your responses. All data will be reported in-group form only. You may receive the group results upon completion of this study on or about September 2007, at the following location of the Pfau Library, California State University, and 5500 University Parkway, San Bernardino, CA 92408.

Your participation in this study is totally voluntary. You are free not to answer any questions and to withdraw at any time from this study without penalty. When you have completed the interview, you will receive a debriefing statement describing the study in more detail.

It is hoped that the benefits of this study will far outweigh the smallest possible risks. This study will probably give insight of the need for additional social service programs by educating social service providers about the needs of the homeless.

If you have any concerns or questions about this study, please feel free to contact Dr. Rosemary McCaslin at (909) 537-5507.

By placing a check mark in the box below, I acknowledge that I have been informed of, and that I understand, the nature and purpose of this study, and I freely consent to participate. I also acknowledge that I am at least 18 years of age.

Place check mark here _____    Today’s Date: _______
APPENDIX C
DEBRIEFING STATEMENT
Debriefing Statement

You have just participated in a study that explored the attitudes and perceptions of experts on the housing issues of the homeless population that you provide services for on order to find out how this situation could be addressed, locally.

If you should have any questions or concerns regarding the study, please feel free to contact Dr. Rosemary McCaslin at California State University, San Bernardino, Department of Social Work (909) 537-5507.

If you would like to review the results of this study you can visit the Pfau Library at California State University San Bernardino after June 2007.

Thank you for your participation in this study.
REFERENCES


Journal of Housing and Community Development. (2005). HUD to provide record amount of funding to homeless programs. The National Association of Housing & Redevelopment.


