

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
JOHN W. RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY IN ATTITUDES AND BELIEF ABOUT THE
NORTHERN CALIFORNIA HOMELESS POPULATION

Prospectus Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education
by
Ethel Diane McKay

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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ABSTRACT

Homelessness is a problem in the United States. By observing and collecting data regarding the views of multiple stakeholders, this researcher offers a study regarding attitudes and opinions about homelessness in two rural, northern California cities (Barmann, 2018, para. 2). By using a phenomenological approach for gathering and analyzing data, the researcher offers the essence of experiences of those who are helping the homeless population. By interviewing local government officials, pastors, and homeless advocates, where they are, in their offices, churches, or at local coffee shops, this researcher went to where the phenomenon occurs. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the attitudes regarding the homeless in northern California. The setting was at participants' offices, churches, and local coffee shops. At this stage in the research, homelessness is generally defined as not having a space of one's own to call home. The theory guiding this study are those precepts based on biblical mandates for caring for the poor. Secular government and institutions are doing what can be done to meet the needs of the poor. The church appears to alternate between having no responsibility to only having limited obligation, depending on theological leanings within the institutions.

Keywords: Homeless, attitudes, theology, government, faith based

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Dedication

This is dedicated to my children. Amanda, Suzanna, Ramona, Sarah, Kathleen, Elijah, and Joshua, thank you for your inspiration, for your patience, and for helping me see this through. David, my husband, thank you because without your loving prodding, coaxing and continued support, this would not be possible.

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My first acknowledgement is to God, my friend, and Jesus Christ, my Savior. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for sending the Holy Spirit into my life, so many years and adventures ago. This life you've given me is one that has been fraught with trials, yet you have led me through them all, and to this educational goal. I will forever sing of your goodness (King James Bible, 1798/2003, Psalm 96).

I would also like to thank all the people who agreed to participate in this study. The raw and unbridled conversations were filled with emotion, and I feel that each individual is a hero for the love they show the unloved.

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List of Abbreviations

Continuum of Care (CoC)

Good News Rescue Mission (GNRM)

Neighborhood Policing Unit (NPU)

Point in Time (PIT)

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

Axillary Dwelling Units (ADU's)

Bethel School of Supernatural Ministry (BSSM)

Extremely low incomes (ELI)

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

Non-Governmental Organization (NGO)

CHAPTER ONE: RESEARCH CONCERN

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological research was to ascertain how attitudes about homelessness have a direct impact on policies towards the homeless population in the cities of Redding and Chico, California. Both cities were chosen as a way of comparison, as Redding is home to a megachurch, which may or may not have an impact on attitudes in Redding. This chapter offers a purpose statement, the significance of the study, and the research questions which determined if negative attitudes towards the homeless affected the services and spiritual growth people need to be whole.

The Point in Time (PIT) count for Shasta County shows a disparaging aspect that creates homelessness. That is rent overburden. “The median gross income for households in Shasta County is \$44,620 a year, or \$3,718 a month. The median rent for the county is \$926 a month. Households who pay more than thirty percent of their gross income are considered to be *rent overburdened*. In Shasta County, a household making less than \$3,087 a month would be considered overburdened when renting an apartment at or above the median rent. 55.94% of households who rent are overburdened in Shasta County” (Shasta County Community Action, 2020, p. 27). Lack of affordable housing is the number one reason given by experts for homelessness (NLIHC, 2018).

Background to the Problem

Many major cities such as Los Angeles and Seattle are currently front-page news for an increase in their respective homeless populations that simply cannot be ignored and seems hopeless to solve. California’s Governor Gavin Newsom was forced to admit the state’s homeless population growth and subsequent social problems are out of control, and along with a

court order issued by a Los Angeles County judge (City News Service, 2021). He then devised a 12-billion-dollar plan to combat homelessness in California (Newsom, 2021).

There are many reasons for homelessness. Some people have become homeless because they've lost a job, gotten a divorce, or suffer from addictions like drugs and alcohol (Mabahala, 2017, p. 2). Some people, who live on a fixed income, for example, still can't afford a home as rental prices for a modest three-bedroom home or apartment, in many areas, far exceed full time minimum wage amounts and this has created the "working homeless" (Wagner, 2018, para. 3). "According to a recent report from the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, eight million Americans pay more than half their income on rent, a larger percentage of the growing rental population is extremely low-income renters, and the nation has a shortage of 7.2 million affordable rental units (NLIHC, 2018)" (McCormick, 2018, para. 13).

Clearly, homelessness and poverty are problems that the nation suffers, as a whole, and due to Covid-19, these problems have become even more pronounced, especially in larger cities (City news center, 2018). As the country begins navigating the long-term effects of the pandemic, homelessness is a problem that can't be ignored any longer. Rural Shasta County, specifically, Redding, the county seat, was surveyed to assess the needs and the services being offered in the state with the largest population of homeless people. And rural Butte county, specifically, Chico, was studied for a possible distinction in attitudes. The researcher explored whether Redding, a more conservative area, had differing attitudes about the homeless population than Chico, with Butte being a more liberal county.

There are several contributing factors that can cause a person to become homeless. Childhood or adult traumas such as abuse, PTSD, a lack of education or skills to make a decent wage. As Mabahala states

Several studies explain the link between social factors and homelessness. The most common social explanations center on seven distinct domains of deprivation: income; employment; health and disability; education, skills, and training; crime; barriers to housing and social support services; and living environment. Of all forms, income deprivation has been reported as having the highest risk factors associated with homelessness: studies indicate that people from the most deprived backgrounds are disproportionately represented amongst the homeless. This population group experiences clusters of multiple adverse health, economic and social conditions such as alcohol and drug misuse, lack of affordable housing and crime. Studies consistently show an association between risk of homelessness and clusters of poverty, low levels of education, unemployment or poor employment, and lack of social and community support (Mabahala, 2017, p. 2).

For Shasta County, the PIT homeless count occurs in the last week of January and consists of volunteers hitting the bricks and counting all of the homeless people they encounter. A questionnaire is answered by the homeless person. For the 2020 NorCal CoC report, there were 816 persons counted: 454 unsheltered and 362 sheltered, designating Shasta County with 53.4% of the homeless population in the NorCal Coc region. Other demographic information includes the fact that 59 were veterans, 59 children under the age of 18, 174 persons with felony convictions and 151 persons who are homeless were former foster care children (Shasta County Community Action Agency, 2020, p. 26). In 2018, there were 692 people counted, and in 2019, 827 people were counted, a 19.5% increase (PIT, 2019, p. 34).

When rent for a three bedroom, according to the 2020 report, averages around \$1300 or more, it is easy to understand how a car repair or a medical emergency could instantly send any fragile budget into a tailspin, causing a family the potential of becoming homeless. As the saying goes, becoming homeless is less than a paycheck away for many families. The number one culprit, however, for the whole country, is there are just not enough affordable homes to rent or buy for the average American worker. Since the Covid 19 pandemic, this has been exacerbated.

A Lack of Affordable Housing

In Shasta County, in northern California, “The City of Redding submitted an application through United States Senator Dianne Feinstein to get approval for a grant that would give the city over \$600,000 to provide micro-shelters and support services for those experiencing homelessness” (Madsen, May 19, 2021).

Leading studies confer that a lack of affordable housing is the number one reason for homelessness (NLCPH). The National Law Center on Poverty and Homelessness (NLCPH) states

Insufficient income and lack of affordable housing are the leading causes of homelessness. In 2012, 10.3 million renters (approximately one in four) had ‘extremely low incomes’ (ELI) as classified by HUD. In that same year, there were only 5.8 million rental units affordable to the more than 10 million people identified as ELI. Additionally, only 31 out of every 100 of these affordable units were actually available to people identified as ELI. Also, after paying their rent and utilities, 75% of ELI households end up with less than half of their income left to pay for necessities such as food, medicine, transportation, or childcare. The 2008 foreclosure crisis also played, and continues to play, a significant role in homelessness. State and local homeless groups reported a 61% rise in homelessness since the foreclosure crisis began. Approximately 40% of families facing eviction due to foreclosure are renters; the problem may continue to worsen as renters represent a rising segment of the U.S. population (NLCPH, 2018).

According to the most recent annual survey by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, major cities across the country report that top causes of homelessness among families were: (1) lack of affordable housing, (2) unemployment, (3) poverty, and (4) low wages, in that order. The same report found that the top four causes of homelessness among unaccompanied individuals were (1) lack of affordable housing, (2) unemployment, (3) poverty, (4) mental illness and the lack of needed services, and (5) substance abuse and the lack of needed services (NLCPH, 2018). In other words, the problem is the same for a family as for the individual. There is simply not enough affordable housing to go around. And when you are a homeless individual on the streets, you can often end up being criminalized just for being homeless and hungry.

Criminalizing the Homeless

When municipalities ignore the structural reasons for homelessness and just rely on the fact that people want the homeless out of sight, this creates a set of laws that are strictly used to control the homeless population. For example, panhandling is included in a list of can't dos in Redding. "Some citizen groups oppose the anti-panhandling campaigns. They argue that panhandlers are needy and should have the right to solicit money directly from the public. They say that not all panhandlers are drug addicts or are planning to use the money for illicit activities. They contend that many panhandle only out of necessity, and the money is most often used for food or survival needs" (Constitutional, 2013, para. 2). Homeless people are hampered by laws that prevent camping and panhandling. But just who is panhandling? One 2011 survey of the homeless showed that 9 percent had drug or alcohol issues, 27 percent had a record of a mental illness, 26 percent had a physical disability, 9 percent had experienced domestic violence (past or present), 14 percent were on parole or probation, and 4 percent had some type of a developmental disability" (Constitutional, 2013, para. 1). Other crimes are loitering, sleeping on sidewalks or walkways, or using the bathroom behind bushes, as an example.

The Redding Chamber of Commerce offers anti-panhandling signs, and states "A few citizens have mistakenly confused this effort with insensitivity towards our homeless population" (Redding, 2013). Jessica Delaney, spokesperson for the Shasta County Homeless Continuum of Care Council, stated "Don't be afraid to put the sign up because you will look like a meanie" (Benda, 2013, para. 14). This is one way to keep people from getting help from their fellow human beings. "Panhandling. Even the word made me cringe. The idea of holding a pan...on the side of the road to collect money just hit me the wrong way. I would cross the street to avoid

their eyes...I didn't see a person. I saw a problem" (Sky, 2018, p. 111). Many people consider the homeless population as problems to be solved, not people to be loved.

Along with restrictions on panhandling, there are municipal codes in Redding against camping on public or private lands or sleeping in one's car in violation of city ordinance 2309 section 110.40.010 (B) implemented in 2003 (Municode Library).

City ordinances have also prohibited people to take advantage of the 9th U.S. District Court ruling that explicitly prohibits "cruel and unusual punishment" of the homeless. The order states, "Turning to the merits, the panel held that the Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause of the Eighth Amendment precluded the enforcement of a statute prohibiting sleeping outside against homeless individuals with no access to alternative shelter. The panel held that, as long as there is no option of sleeping indoors, the government cannot criminalize indigent, homeless people for sleeping outdoors, on public property, on the false premise they had a choice in the matter" (Martin vs. Boise). Unfortunately, many cities are finding ways around this ruling, refusing to build more shelters or to continue with encampment cleanups.

In Redding, enclosed public parks are off limits and a park by the Sacramento river has been placed off limits by the Fish and Game Department, leaving no relief for those seeking to use the federal ruling (Scheide, 2019, para, 35). In Chico, the city hoped to move some 500 plus homeless individuals from city parks to a tarmac at the local airport, but this was deemed unsatisfactory for the federal judge overseeing the "no camping/camping allowed" 9th circuit ruling (Hanson, 2021, para. 2). With temperatures above 100 degrees during the summer months, and for the past two weeks, well over 110+, sending people to camp in open, unshaded spaces on a concrete airport tarmac is considered unacceptable and further fostering an unhealthy living

environment for the homeless. Chico is home to many creeks and treed parks, and this is a more acceptable environment, according to the homeless and the advocates who assist them.

Statement of the Problem

This researcher is concerned about attitudes towards the poor and homeless of the nation. It is imperative that believers do not forget their true calling. That is, to help the poor and oppressed and to not allow themselves to demonstrate “love that has waxed cold” (*KJV*, 1798/2009, Matthew 24:12). The biblical mandate would dictate that the widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor *are* the homeless. The church is called to “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (*King James Bible*, 1798/2003, 1 Peter 5:2-4). However, when it comes to fault, the following poll is disturbing.

The Washington Post and the Kaiser Family Foundation in May 2017, conducted a poll and asked 1,686 American adults to answer the following question, “Which is generally more often to blame if a person is poor: lack of effort on their own part, or difficult circumstances beyond their control?” They “found that religion is a significant predictor of how Americans perceive poverty” and that, “Christians are much more likely than non-Christians to view poverty as the result of individual failings, especially white evangelical Christians” (Zauzmer, 2017, para. 3). The question after this poll is what is the Church’s responsibility towards care of the homeless?

Apparently, this poll made significant waves as Charles indicates. “Newsweek wrote: ‘Jesus Christ may have lived as a poor man and consistently been on the side of those with little

material wealth', but a poll shows almost half of the Christians in the United States believe people who live in poverty do so because they're lazy. The Daily Mail indicated that Christian's beliefs about the poor were irrational: A study last week suggested that religious people cling to certain beliefs even when they contradict evidence because they are overly emotional and irrational". Lastly, The Huffington Post stated: "The Jesus of the Bible had plenty to say about the poor — their dignity, righteousness, and faith. He went so far as to suggest that those who serve the poor will inherit the kingdom of God" (Charles, 2017, para. 5). The Bible is clear about taking care of the poor.

Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary said, "The Christian worldview is saying that all poverty is due to sin, though that doesn't necessarily mean the sin of the person in poverty. In the Garden of Eden, there would have been no poverty. In a fallen world, there is poverty" (Zauzmer, 2017, para. 4). This is a biblical viewpoint, and no one can dispute the fact that sin in the world causes a myriad of problems, including poverty and homelessness.

Christians are commanded throughout the Bible to care for the strangers, widows, orphans, and the poor. James expresses this ideology in scripture in Chapter 2 when he discusses faith and works. The scripture states "14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, 16 And one of you say unto them, depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? 17 Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (*KJV*, 1798/2003, James 2:14-17). James had a practical understanding of caring for the poor, carrying on the viewpoints from the Pentateuch and Jesus regarding the lesser ones who couldn't speak for themselves and who

would always need to be cared for: orphans, widows, and strangers, the poor. And that until basic needs are met, continued conversation regarding the gospel of Jesus Christ can be pointless.

This researcher is interested in understanding attitudes about the poor and homeless populations of northern California, including activities that affect housing, policing, and meeting basic needs. This researcher is also interested in theological views regarding the homeless issue. Hawtry explains, “The Bible is not silent about social and economic affairs. God is concerned with the treatment of the poor, and we should be too: ‘he is blessed who is kind to the needy’ (Proverbs 14:21)” (Hawtry, 2010, p. 67). God hates economic injustice, and so should we: ‘better a little with righteousness than much gain with injustice’ (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Proverbs 16:8). “Christians should be at the forefront of advocating for the downtrodden and should not ignore grinding hardship or injustice when making economic prescriptions or casting our vote. ...we might be moved by the Bible’s recognition of love, grace, mercy, and generosity (1 John 4:8,16) to advocate for assistance to the ‘widows and orphans’ of our day... (Hawtry, 2010, p. 68). Many widows and orphans are on the streets of America.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to ascertain attitudes and feelings about what should be done to help the homeless by interviewing local government officials, pastors of differing theological foundations, and advocates who work with the homeless. The setting of interviews were coffee shops nearby local homeless shelters, governmental official offices, and churches in Redding and Chico.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What is the City of Redding doing to address the homeless issue?

RQ2. What is the City of Chico doing to address the homeless issue?

RQ3. What are Christian leaders doing to address the issue of homelessness in Redding?

RQ4. What are Christian leaders doing to address the issue of homelessness in Chico?

RQ5. What are homeless advocates doing regarding homelessness in Redding?

RQ6. What are homeless advocates doing regarding homelessness in Chico?

RQ7. Do attitudes regarding the homeless affect policy making?

Assumptions and Delimitations

There are many homeless people, statewide, and nationwide. However, for the purposes of this study,

1. The study was delimited to a small number of denominations to ascertain theological precepts concerning the homeless in Redding, California. It did not include every denomination in the city, but only those selected at random by the researcher.

2. This study was delimited to the advocates for the homeless in Redding and Chico, California. It did not include state or nationwide homeless advocacy groups or individuals.

3. This study is delimited to the government officials in the city of Redding or Chico and the respective counties of Shasta or Butte. It did not include officials from any other area.

Definition of Terms

HUD's 2020 report offers the following definitions to describe differing groups in the homeless population.

1. *Homeless* describes a person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

2. The *chronically homeless* individual refers to a person with a disability who has been continuously homeless for one year or more.

3. *Sheltered homelessness* refers to people who are staying in emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or safe havens.

4. *Unsheltered homeless* refers to people whose primary nighttime location is a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for people (for example, the streets, vehicles, or parks) (Henry, 2020, p. 2).

5. *Continuum of Care (CoC)* organizations. CoCs' are defined by HUD as "local planning bodies responsible for coordinating the full range of homelessness services in a geographic area, which may cover a city, county, metropolitan area, or an entire state" (Henry, 2020, p. 2).

6. *Neighborhood Policing Unit (NPU)* – "This one sergeant, four-officer unit is free from general calls for service and works hard to conduct proactive enforcement to help keep our community safe. The Neighborhood Police Unit often works with patrol operations personnel in an effort to identify and capture individuals who continue to negatively impact the quality of life in our community" (Redding Police, 2019).

7. *Working homeless* – According to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty relates that "...over a million people *are* working full or part-time but unable to pay for housing" (National Law, 2020).

8. *Housing First Model* – According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, the housing first model "an approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life" (Housing First Fact Sheet, (August, 2022).

Significance of the Study

As homelessness continues to exist, the homeless *are* the strangers, orphans, and widows and the poor, Christians are biblically mandated to care for. Mega churches that exponentially prosper monetarily, while the poor languish in America's major cities, without their assistance, are fortunately, not representative of all Christians. Many faith-based programs exist in every region, struggling to meet the needs of the poor and homeless. Working with the poor can be effective in bringing people to the fold, once they understand the power of the Holy Spirit and the saving grace of Jesus Christ, if not to pull them out of poverty, then to make poverty bearable. As Christian leaders, it is imperative that biblical principles are promoted.

The gospel fundamentally changes the hearts of believers. Therefore, the advance of the gospel should bring a decrease in oppression that makes some rich and others poor. It should also change attitudes toward work that will create more wealth, more independent people, and surpluses that can be shared. Critically, the gospel changes the hearts of rich people who would otherwise hoard a surplus into hearts that imitate the generosity of Christ toward the poor by sharing wealth. A thorough understanding of grace inevitably leads to a desire to feed those who are hungry and clothe the unfortunate, as Jesus made clear in his description of the separation of the sheep and goats (Matthew 25:31-46) (Bradley, 2014, p. 81).

Biblical mandates should determine proper theology when it comes to assisting the homeless. There are many Christians who recognize that poverty is due to the fallen state of mankind and not necessarily due to the fault of the individual. Structural problems in economics, education, and cultural environment add to the reasons for homelessness and poverty.

Acknowledgements can be made that drug abuse, alcoholism, mental illness, convictions of crimes, and other factors can aggravate one's economic status, but attention needs to be given to the very economics of life; nonliving wages, high rents, but mostly, a lack of affordable housing, nationwide. These issues being part of a complex, physical economic puzzle doesn't negate the church from her responsibility to assist this vulnerable population. When the number

of people is so high you can't avoid the issue any longer, is not the time to act. The time to act is now. Every church in America should be working with the homeless, to some degree, just to keep their hands in the problem. Food banks, clothing, and other types of assistance, such as gas cards, utility assistance payments and other helping programs should be the norm, not the exception.

The assumption is that the homeless, if they don't work, and many do, don't work because of their personal laziness and inadequacy and not because of structural reasons or economic downturns and recessions. Within such an assumption, the case manager gets to work on fixable "problems" that he/she can supposedly fix rather than seeking structural change over which she has no control. As a result of managing the system generated problems at the individual level, the privatized non-profit sector manages the system disruption potential of "public issues" that are related to the operations of the social institutions. They provide such "help" through provision of minimal resources and cultural indoctrination that forms a barrier between the actual conditions the individual faces and the consciousness produced as a result. By wedging material conditions from subjective culture, such objectively produced and pushed "culture" prevent mass mobilization by those that are victims of gross injustice within a system where the top 1% controls greater financial wealth than the bottom 95% combined (Wolff 2001)" (Asadi, 2013, p. 255).

The truth needs to be told about homelessness and there is no one size fits all approach as a solution. Christians can be mobilized to assist all facets of homelessness, but studies indicate that the bare minimum is being done, at least by American churches, due to attitudes that appear to be political, and not biblical, in nature. After all, this is the 20th anniversary of George Bush's faith-based solutions to social problems (Bush, 2001, para. 1) and societal problems have increased.

Summary of the Design

Determining attitudes and feelings about the homeless problem in Shasta and Butte counties required doing qualitative research. Qualitative phenomenological research is valuable in finding out about problems and developing ideas for further research in order to delve deeper into solving problems. Creswell explains some qualitative methods available to the researcher

include focus groups, observations, and interviews. A small sample size is used, and qualitative information seeks more to describe a problem rather than to measure the problem (Creswell, 2018, p. 188).

This study was conducted using a phenomenological design to collect and analyze the research data. Creswell states, "...researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study" and "...researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants" (Creswell, 2018, p. 181). Purposively chosen participants included those who help the homeless, such as pastors and advocates. Local county or city officials were interviewed using semi-structured questions regarding plans for possible future enhancement of homeless services.

This researcher conducted these semi-structured interviews at coffee shops, the offices of government leaders, churches of pastors in the study, and at shelter sites for homeless advocates. The same types of officials, pastors, and advocates were interviewed in the nearby town of Chico. Chico has a comparable population to Redding, so a comparison of services offered and any future plans for enhanced services were similar in scope.

Using the holistic approach presented by Creswell is a means to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. "This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges. The larger picture is not necessarily a linear model of cause and effect but rather a model of multiple factors intersecting in different ways...mirrors real life and the ways that events operate in the real world" (Creswell, 2018, p. 182). Homelessness is a complex issue and there are a myriad of problems that need solutions. This researcher wanted to know if attitudes

are reflective of services being either offered or denied by government and churches in these neighboring northern California cities.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

This phenomenological study sought to examine attitudes towards the homeless population and how those attitudes are revealed in policy making. This researcher offers a theological and theoretical framework for this study, as well as related literature. Included also is a rationale for the study and the gap in literature. A profile of the current study will also be offered. Homelessness is a social problem that affects the nation in a hugely destructive manner, and the evangelical church seeks to regain a proper footing after recent political losses. The Church would do well to return to its mandates regarding caring for the poor and homeless of America instead of looking for political answers to social problems. Simply ignoring the issue will not make it go away, and if the Christian church isn't involved in solving these problems, then can they truly be solved? It will take love and determination by fellow citizens to curb this epidemic, not just government monies. It will take miraculous intervention by God to take care of America's citizens who are alone and afraid on the streets of America.

Theological Framework for the Study

When considering the natural human being, he or she is biblically viewed as being brought forth in iniquity (*KJV*, 1789/2003, Psalm 51:5) and is rebellious (*KJV*, 1789/2003, Isaiah 48:8). The bible states that man is incapable of purity (*KJV*, 1789/2003, Job 14:4, 15:14). This fallen state creates the sickness, trauma, and pain that come in many forms; physiological, psychological, and spiritual due to this fallen nature of man and the subsequent effects on the human life. The Apostle Peter tells us that the Shepherd is a healer and Christ's suffering is the source of that power. This "healing" aspect of the Shepherd is also alluded to in Isaiah 53 and Ezekiel 34. In Revelation this suffering of the followers is the "mark of identity," with Jesus

(Laniak, 2006, p. 231), but healing will come upon the Christ's return. The undershepherds who dwell with the sheep during this waiting period are to be *willing* to serve and display accountability and responsibility. Humility is the key, according to Peter. "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:" (*KJV*, 1798/2003, 1 Peter 5:5-6).

Sometimes when a person experiences a traumatic event, like homelessness, even a believer can have a "crisis in faith". This is when the crisis creates an altered view of God, and theological foundations change due to the severity of the incident causing the crisis. Peter exhorts us to remember that God's promises have been granted to believers in order that they may be partakers in the "divine nature" of God (*KJV*, 1798/2003, 2 Peter 1:4).

"Thomas Oden, in his book *Classical Pastoral Care* referred to pastors in the early church as individuals who engaged in what he refers to as 'soul care'" (Shields, 2001, p. 301). The role of the shepherd in caring for the flock entrusts to him four tasks regarding the "soul care" of others. They are healing the sick, sustaining the poor and grieving, guiding those in crisis, and finally, assisting those needing reconciliation, such as a couple in the throes of marital discord or a prodigal child needing forgiveness and understanding (Shields, 2011, p. 301).

Notice the tenet about "sustaining the poor". Soul care cannot begin when people are hungry, cold, or sick. People need a place to call home. Bouma-Prediger relates that "Elie Wiessel once described the 20th century as 'the age of the expatriate, the refugee, the stateless and the wanderer. Never before have so many human beings fled from so many homes'" (Bouma-Prediger, 2008, p. 7).

The homeless in America are simply refugees, much as the homeless are, globally. An economic war of attrition is being fought and the homeless and poor are losing. But there is hope. The story of Exodus is “a story of liberation from homeless slavery in order to be at home again with the covenant-making God, even if that requires being at home in the uninhabitable place of wilderness” and teaches that home can be found again with God (Bouma-Pediger, 2008, p. 18). But if no one is offering the scriptures to the homeless as they languish on America’s streets, how do they know that God is their home? How can they be reconciled to God, to their families, or to society? Only by hearing the life affirming message of the gospel of Jesus Christ can they be delivered spiritually.

Christians are to help people gain restoration and reconciliation by the act of forgiveness; whether from one person to another or from one to God, Himself. Redemption from sin is the goal of the gospel and should be in the forefront of whatever situation the Christian finds themselves in. Discussions involving redemption through faith in Christ, the need to forgive oneself and others for offenses, and the ability for self-reflection and spiritual discernment can lessen the traumatic situations that all people experience in life. However, for our homeless brothers and sisters, these can be lofty ideals without real merit unless these individuals are secure in their basic needs being met.

The Holy Spirit is a person who operates through believers. Understanding what the Bible teaches as the main occupation of the believer is important for spiritual growth. Jesus taught us to love one another, to be at peace with each other and to live in harmony, as much as possible (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Romans 12:18). The poor, destitute and homeless are not to be an exception when it comes to loving our neighbors as ourselves. By faith and education, Christians can be at the forefront of assisting the many people who will be facing dire economic straits that

may translate into homelessness and poverty. This requires the believer to have a Christlike character that will ensure ethical decision making which is decision making that is good for the whole community, not just select special interests. “Martin Luther King, Jr. once said: ‘We’ve got to begin to ask questions about the whole society. We are called upon to help the discouraged beggars in life’s market place. But one day we must come to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring’” (Bouma-Pediger, 2008, p. 92). Low wages, high rents and a lack of opportunity keep some on the lower economic scale.

Christian leadership demands that someone ask the questions that need to be asked. What are the structural reasons for homelessness? How can believers help to make economic structural foundational changes? What can be done to reveal class struggles as being the real culprit behind racism, sexism, ageism? How does the church include the poor and marginalized? Many people are leaving the church and many more who would like to be a part of a congregation hesitantly wait for welcome from the church itself.

There is a YouTube video that expresses exactly what the average Christian thinks of the homeless population. In the video, Pastor Jeremiah Steeppek, a new pastor whom the congregants hadn’t met, comes to his new church environment as a homeless man, with dirty clothes, and a filthy long beard and hair on purpose. He posed as a homeless man in order to demonstrate the attitudes of the congregants towards the homeless. He came into the church and sat in the back pew. This was after he had ransacked the dumpster outside and brought his “treasures” into the building, to the horror of many of the congregation. The video divulges that new teal upholstery had just been put on the pews, and then he put his dirty bag of stuff on one. Only 3 of the 7-10,000 members even said hello to him. He asked for change for food, and no one gave him any

change. When he sat in the front, he was asked by the ushers to sit in back. When he greeted people, they stared with dirty looks and judged him.

When the man was introduced, the congregation clapped with joy, eagerly waiting to meet their new pastor. This homeless man started walking towards the front, and as he walked to the podium, the claps and enthusiasm started fading and then stopped as he got to the front of the church. The congregants stared in astonishment. He then recited Matthew 25:34-46.

34 Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: 36 Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. 37 Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? 38 When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? 39 Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? 40 And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. 41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: 43 I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. 44 Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? 45 Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. 46 And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Matthew 25:34-46).

As Pastor Steepeck told his new congregation what he had experienced that morning as a homeless man among them, many of them began to cry and bow their heads in shame. He told them, “Today I see a gathering of people, not a church of Jesus Christ. The world has enough people, but not enough disciples. When will you decide to become a disciple? (McIsencraft, 2019).

As Christians, Yount states “The only thing that binds us together is our common experience of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The Church is a sociocultural context in

which believers worship and learn together praying, singing, ministering, giving, and receiving. With Christ as our Head, the community grows together as various parts of the Body, separate, yet one, a social reorganization. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, individuals move from pagan to believer, believer to disciple, disciple to teacher, teacher to leader, and leader to missionary. Individuals, engaged in God's Family, Christ's Body, form an us-ness that extends to every corner of the earth" (Yount, 2010, p. 126). This is a parallel to the center pillar in Yount's Discippler Model that stands for relationships (Yount, 2010, p. 126). "We build 'community,' the 'Body of Christ,' the 'Church Family.'" (Yount, 2010, p. 19). The Christian obligation has to be extended into the neighboring community, and that includes the marginalized, oppressed, homeless, and poor of one's locale. Taking care of the vulnerable *is* the main job for the believer.

Christian Views

In the city of Redding, the common perception is that the homeless are alcoholics, drug addicts, or those who "choose," to be homeless. Attacks against the homeless appear in news stories, where they may be demonized, or in actual physical attacks, wherein the attacker has fostered a hatred towards this subclass of society (Schultze, 2010, para. 3). Being unhoused brings its own problems with hatred being one of them. It is dangerous for the homeless on the streets of America. People need safe environments to flourish as human beings.

In our 21st century Western worldview, part of safety is occupying a space that belongs to the individual. Such states,

Ownership of property functions as something of a bulwark of human independence and security. The presence of the homeless body, the "other," is a reminder of the threat of the insecurity of existence because that body is incapable of contributing to the economy and so cannot form or maintain identity through the interconnectedness between places and persons. In contrast, as the "other," the homeless person reinforces self-identity of those living in community (the "same"), by representing societal fears of loss ("economic death"). Therefore, conformance to a propriety norm is maintained by denigrating the "other" as unworthy pathologically – through alcoholism, drug addiction,

mental illness, immorality, poverty, violence, squalor etc., circumstantially – through residing in shelters, camps, unoccupied buildings etc., and biblically – through failing to render godly stewardship because such a person threatens a constructed societal and individual identity” (Such, 2013, p. 5).

In other words, housed people don’t want to be confronted by the homeless because they fear they could end up homeless, themselves, and indeed, many people are facing evictions and loss of housing due to the covid pandemic’s hits on the U. S. economy, and who may have never experienced homelessness and perhaps maybe never would, would it not be for the pandemic’s enormous effect on economic planes directly related to housing, jobs, and educational pursuits.

The guiding theory for this research offers both narrative and practical theology. Narrative theology expresses the idea that the Scriptures tell the story of God and God’s people, and that today’s believers are simply an extension of that story. “...it seems that there is indeed something universal about narratives of exile and return, of homelessness and the perilous journey back home. Humans are incurable storytellers, and our stories seem to be preoccupied with home” (Bouma-Prediger, 2008, p. 11). Narratives are stories and the Bible contains the stories of God’s interactions with humanity and have been told and written for humanity’s benefit (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Romans 15:4). When we hear the oral history of a people, we are hearing the truth about their experiences and how they felt about the events that took place.

Bouma-Pediger states,

Homes become homes when they embody the stories of the people who have made these spaces into places of significance, meaning and memory. Home is fundamentally a place of connection, of relationships that are life-giving and fundamental. And that connectivity includes the past, for homes are shaped by memories of important transitions, events, and experiences. Once those stories are forgotten, there is no home to return to because there is no place, or even potential place, that could be shaped by those stories...(Bouma-Petiger, 2008, p. 130).

Everyone has a story to tell, and everyone wants to tell their story.

The question is: Is anyone listening? Truth is, as Bouma-Petiger states, “Christian sojourners are people of the Book. Their lives are shaped by the stories from the Bible and its grand Story – from the joyous homemaking of the Creator to the costly homemaking of Jesus to the glorious homecoming of God, the great reconciler and recycler...we are people of memory. We remember the grand story and all the little stories that are part of it, the sad stories as well as the happy stories...as Elie Wisel reminds us, the great temptation is to forget” (Bouma-Petiger, 2008, p. 297). Christians must not forget that they, themselves, are homeless, until we are with God, yet God in his goodness, has given humanity to whole world to steward and to have as a home.

When considering the homeless population, it is important to remember that there are individuals with their own stories about how they became homeless, experiences while being homeless, and stories about whether or not they are having their spiritual needs met. This should be of concerned to Christians, as the gospel is a saving message, designed to give hope to the hopeless and direction for the lost. Nixon has offered a homeless theology based on narratives experienced by the homeless.

In this way, listening to the voices of homeless men and women is to be pointed towards an exploration and understanding of a larger paradigm which provides a frame of reference for listening to the experience of a wide range of people in many different contexts who increasingly have a sense of their lives being shaped by a space, or spaces, which they have to occupy, but to which they do not belong. In this way the issues of homelessness come to be set in a wider societal context, with a theological critique of globalization (characterized by privatization, the freedom of the market, and deregulation) and its impact on individual lives, especially those who are vulnerable and inhabit what society regards as its margins (Nixon, 2013, p. 3).

Nixon asserts that the homeless no longer have a voice in their own lives and as a priest, he found his own “spiritual poverty” was uplifted by the narratives of the homeless people he interviewed. Most troubling to him, however, was their lack of spiritualism. “...interviewees

expressed a limited range of images and ideas associated with God, which include holding God to blame for their troubles. There was a range of expression about Church and the Bible, some interesting attempts to develop a personal theology and examples of black humor. It would be arrogant and misplaced to conclude that there is an absence of spirituality here, though there is little that is specifically Christian” (Nixon, 2013, p. 145). This is the mandate. To assist people in understanding God, Jesus, and the nature of Christianity as a tool to navigate homelessness and life in general.

A practical theology would determine that scriptures be adhered to when operating in life as a Christian. Loving one another and loving our enemies as ourselves are two of the commands of Jesus that should be operational in every Christian’s life (*KJV*, 1798/2003, John 15:12, Matthew 5:43-44). Without an everyday application of scriptural truths, what good is the gospel? Practical theology would say that you can’t make disciples out of people you don’t know anything about. James said one would know one’s faith by his works. “...when we come to the question of knowing God, the Bible plunges us into caring for those he cares for, and thus into living with a concrete concern for the poor, the weak and those who suffer” (Kapic, 2013, Location No. 721). Kapic continues, “Pride has lost sight of the gap between the holy Creator and sinful humanity, producing self-absorption and contempt for others. Humility has a vision of God’s majesty, love, and forgiveness in Christ, producing love for God and one’s neighbors (Phil 2:1-5). How we treat others...living neighbors...reveals a great deal about how we view ourselves before God (1 Jn 3:10-17; 4:7-21) (Kapic, 2013, Location No. 608). Just how are Christians thinking and feeling about others, especially the poor?

Some studies suggest a coolness that seems to be entrenching itself in the masses of believers. For instance, *The Washington Post* and the Kaiser Family Foundation in May 2017,

conducted a poll and asked 1,686 American adults to answer the following question, “Which is generally more often to blame if a person is poor: lack of effort on their own part, or difficult circumstances beyond their control?” (Zauzmer, 2017, para. 1). They “found that religion is a significant predictor of how Americans perceive poverty” (Zauzmer, 2017, para. 2) and that, “Christians are much more likely than non-Christians to view poverty as the result of individual failings, especially white evangelical Christians” (Zauzmer, 2017, para. 4). It should be noted that this group are often part of the prosperity gospel adherents who view poverty as something that is a part of demonic activity and lack the knowledge to see the structural reasons for poverty.

The fallen state of man and the world causes a myriad of problems, including addictions, poverty, domestic abuse, homelessness, and racial injustice. An apathy to assist the poor and oppressed has swept over the land of Americans Christians. “There’s a strong Christian impulse to understand poverty as deeply rooted in morality – often, as the Bible makes clear, in unwillingness to work, in bad financial decisions or in broken family structures. The Christian worldview is saying that all poverty is due to sin, though that doesn’t necessarily mean the sin of the person in poverty. In the Garden of Eden, there would have been no poverty. In a fallen world, there is poverty” (Zauzmer, 2017, para. 4). But poverty can be alleviated, not just materially, but also spiritually. For Bradley, “This is why the role of religious institutions in addressing our cultural and economic problems goes beyond their instrumental value as social service providers. Only an understanding of man that encompasses his transcendent destiny can serve as the proper foundation for a flourishing society. Such as faith reminds us of the limits of material existence and of our final destination...Recognizing that heaven on earth is impossible, we do not pursue utopian schemes...we recognize that what we do in this life contains the seeds

of eternity” (Bradley, 2014, p. 252). Love is the key to overcoming the materialism of American culture.

Pre and Post Millennial Views on Poverty

According to Zauzmer’s article, “Helen Rhee, a historian who studies wealth and poverty in Christianity, attributed Christians’ diverging viewpoint first to scripture and second to a theological divide in the early 20th century”; that being fundamentalists splitting from modernists over whether the theory of evolution, propagated by Charles Darwin should be accepted. Rhee states that an academic split between premillennialists and postmillennialists occurred (Zauzmer, 2017, para 9).

Premillennialists, according to Rhee, believe the Second Coming of Jesus is nearing and believers go to heaven, and tribulation occurs to the non-believer. Postmillennialists, however, believe that a time of peace will occur on earth before Christ returns. Rhee believes that conservative premillennialists believe the world’s ending is imminent and want to save souls. Postmillennialists, however, wish to change the structures of systems. For the premillennialists, Rhee said, “The world is already lost. Things are going to get worse and worse. . . . The betterment of society is very intangible. You don’t know whether it’s going to happen or not. It’s a very difficult thing to do. You’ve got to just focus on what is important – that is, salvation of the soul. That is, preach the gospel. Evangelism” (Zauzmer, 2017, para. 12). If the world is about the end, is the reasoning, saving a person’s soul by correcting his personal behavior will do him good. More good than fixing a structural problem. According to Moher, this thought process has influenced Christian culture. “There’s a rightful Christian impulse to consider poverty a moral issue. . . . Evangelicals are absolutely right to look at the personal dimensions. No apology there”. However, he also stated that the sins that could cause a person to be reduced to poverty

may be the sins of others. “I think conservative Christians often have a very inadequate understanding of the structural dimension of sin” (Zauzmer, 2017, para. 15).

Many people’s beliefs on the question have nothing to do with their faith, as there is a disconnect between what is said at church, and the reality. “There’s just too many that just rely on government, or they rely on family. They just rely too much on other people helping them, rather than just going out and doing it themselves” (Zauzmer, 2017, para. 26). Almost everyone questioned in this poll stated that their church teaches them to help others. After all, churches of every stripe of the denominational and political landscape offer food, clothing, and shelters.

Along with a split of views regarding pre and post millennial eschatological views, these theological differences can create differences in how the poor and homeless are viewed, particularly when one holds fast to the prosperity gospel. For example, Kris Vallotton, 2nd pastor in command at Redding’s Bethel Church, had this to say in his book *Poverty, riches, and wealth: Moving from a life of lack into true Kingdom abundance*, “I want to point out again that Jesus became poor for a reason. His celestial mission was to make us wealthy. It is the great exchange—beauty for ashes, joy for mourning, hope for the hopeless, healing for sickness, *prosperity for poverty*. You get the idea: Jesus called it abundant life,” (Vallotton, 2018, p. 29). Now, abundant life surely means more than material wealth. This point of view regarding poverty has greatly affected the social and political landscape of Redding’s homeless population simply because the poor are considered to be in their situation by “choice” (Vallotton, 2018, p. 13), and seemingly deserving of just a minimum of assistance. In *The Supernatural ways of royalty: Discovering your rights and privileges of being a son or daughter of God*, Vallotton and head Bethel pastor Bill Johnson state,

A pauper uses survival skills because he believes that life is one big “dog eat dog” world. This poverty mentality is the primary attribute of a pauper. Whether a

pauper has experienced poverty in his or her finances or in love and affirmation, all paupers have the common belief that there's never going to be enough for them...God never intended for us to live in poverty in any area of our lives" (Vallotton, 2013, p. 31).

They continue, "The way I see it is that there is a difference between being rich and being wealthy. Wealthy people refuse to be reduced to their balance sheet and their wealth never has them...rich people's self-esteem is attached directly to their "Profit and Loss statement" ...princes don't work for money, but rather they work for God (Vallotton, 2013, p. 37)

The Apostle Paul, a tentmaker, earned his way to Corinth spreading the gospel message of God's love in sending Christ to die for our salvation. "After these things Paul departed from Athens and came to Corinth; 2 And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:) and came unto them. 3 And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought for by their occupation they were tentmakers. 4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks" (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Acts 18:1-4). Paul worked for money and for God.

One reason for a lack of affordable housing in Redding is due to the influx of over 1300 students a year that attend the church's school, Bethel's School of Supernatural Ministry (BSSM) (Bethel, 2021). Bethel doesn't offer dorm rooms, claiming they want students to be hands on in the community healing. "Present in our City-BSSM by design, does not have dorms. Instead we encourage students to live in the neighborhoods and get jobs in the local area so that they can practice bringing Jesus to the marketplace as a part of their learning experience. Many of our students work part-time jobs while they attend school" (Bethel Lifestyle, 2021).

The *Bethel effect* is what many call the economic impact of Bethel and BSSM on the economy of Redding (Benda, March 15, 2014). Many people come from around the world to

start businesses in Redding and attend Bethel school. There is even a Facebook page called “Bethel Affiliated Businesses” so that people can avoid patronizing those businesses owned and operated by Bethel attendees.

Then there is discussion about social justice and how that is a liberal theological given. “Those are stereotypes,” Mohler said when regarding the difference between conservative and liberal churches. “In reality, I think we all know what to do when a hungry person is before us” (Zauzmer, 2017, para. 28). However, when people are refused help, it is a reflection of the fallen state of man in the fallen world. The truth is that the world and man will remain in an imperfect state until the return of Jesus Christ and His restoration of the earth to what God intended. Meanwhile, believers are to be patient and wait on the Lord. “Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh (*KJV*, 1798/2003, James 5:8). Oh, and feed the sheep, a reference to John 21:17. Full tummies inspire hope.

The Gospel is Hope Restored

Hope. It’s a word with universal meaning. Hope is the expectation of something good happening. Hope is defined by psychologist Erik Erikson as “the enduring belief in the benevolence of fate, in spite of dark urges and rages...” and...“hope is the ‘basis of faith’” (Yount, 2010, p. 69). The writer of Hebrews teaches us “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (*KJV*, 1798/2006, Hebrews 11:1).

Being homeless means having hope that one day the individual will, once again, have a coveted space of safety, security, and peace. It is up to the church to instill the hope found in the gospel; neighborly love has to be extended to the hopeless who live without a safe place to simply *be*. “Homelessness is about more than rooflessness. A home is not just a physical space: it provides roots, identity, security, a sense of belonging and a place of emotional wellbeing” (Plos

editors, 2008, p. 1639). McBride agrees. ““homelessness is like a slow execution, [since] the monotony of the day, the exhaustion, the punishment your body takes from the weather, the lack of healthy food, the slavery of labor pools—all lead to death” (McBride, 2017, p. 128). “The homeless individual has a story that needs to be heard and understood. The good news of hope in the gospel story has saving power. “Hope for the sheep that are lost or scattered among the nations is anchored in God’s determined and direct intervention” (Laniak, 2006, p. 154). But this view will only cement itself with the Christian, if he/she is willing to view the big picture of the causes of poverty and homelessness. For instance, Bradley states, “The War on Poverty in the United States, which officially got started in the mid-1960’s, could just as well be called the War on the Poor if we focus on its effects, rather than its objectives” (Bradley, 2014, p. 349).

The Lausanne Movement, started by Reverend Billy Graham in 1970, on their website *about* section, has this to say about their organizational goal: “...we continue to envision and work toward a world in which there is: The gospel for every person, An evangelical church for every people, Christ-like leaders for every church, and a Kingdom impact in every sphere of society” (Lausanne Movement, para. 7). A noble vision and one that most Christians would not argue is imperative to the Great Commission. However, the “Kingdom impact in every sphere of society” is quite a different view from that of prosperity gospel adherents, as the organization states,

We recognize that Prosperity Teaching flourishes in contexts of terrible poverty, and that for many people, it presents their only hope, in the face of constant frustration, the failure of politicians and NGOs, etc., for a better future, or even for a more bearable present. We are angry that such poverty persists, and we affirm the Bible’s view that it also angers God and that it is not his will that people should live in abject poverty. We acknowledge and confess that in many situations the Church has lost its prophetic voice in the public arena. However, we do not believe that Prosperity Teaching provides a helpful or biblical response to the poverty of the people among whom it flourishes. And we observe that much of this teaching has come from North American sources where people are not materially poor in the same way (Lausanne Movement, para. 5).

When Christians are taught that poverty is demonic ((Johnson, 2006, p. 103), they can view the homeless as unworthy and this increases their disdain for the poor and homeless. Shasta County has a bad reputation when it comes to the homeless population. Despite being strategically situated in the mountainous and forested region of Northern California, and despite the fact that many people come to the area to camp with their families on vacation, the homeless are forbidden to camp in the county. The Redding Police Department has a form on their website to report illegal encampments (RPD, February 16, 2019). It should be noted that RPD and Bethel have teamed up with Bethel gifting over \$500,000 to RPD for Neighborhood Policing Units (NPU's) (Lewis, April 19, 2017). These NPU's then walk the 20-block business district downtown, where many Bethel members own small service businesses (RPD, n.d.). The NPU's seek those individuals committing *quality of life* crimes. In Redding, the quality-of-life offenses discussed are disorderly conduct, vagrancy, and loitering. Quality of life crimes mean "homeless" crimes. Quality of life crimes are described as:

Crimes against the public include offenses that affect the quality of life, group violence such as gang activity, and vice crimes. Because quality-of-life crimes are often based on moral or value judgments, these offenses tend to target the poor and downtrodden. If the conduct prohibited involves an individual's status in society, assembling, or speech, the First and Fourteenth Amendments require a narrowly tailored statute supported by a compelling government interest. This creates a conflict between legislators trying to ensure peace and tranquility for citizens and judges upholding the many individual protections included in the Bill of Rights (University of Minnesota, 2012).

Christian leaders ought to uphold the strictest of standards when it comes to the care of the poor, the orphans, widows, and strangers. This would include the poor and homeless of one's immediate locale. Many Christian churches care for and provide for the poor and homeless, by offering food and clothing banks, job training, shelters, and other avenues of provision for the needs of the disadvantaged. The work many churches do is thankless,

sacrificial, and done with brotherly love. However, the homeless population continues to grow across the United States and as the evangelical church regains its theological footing after a seemingly political loss, taking care of the homeless who *are* the widows, strangers, and orphans deserves to be back at the forefront of Christian thinking. “For the poor will never cease out of the land; therefore I command thee, saying, Open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Deuteronomy 15:11).

Believers should never fail to minister to people’s humanity no matter who they are. As the Bible gives the believer the mind of Christ and the ability to become spiritually formed to walk in obedience and faithfulness to his Word, the responsibility to others becomes part of one’s duty to God. “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, 2 Corinthians 9:7). The Bible indicates that God has a special place for the poor and requires that believers should stand and defend the oppressed. The Bible makes it clear that God loves the poor and expects the believers to, also. “For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set [him] in safety [from him that] puffeth at him” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Psalms 12:5). God will always protect the poor and give them provision and safety. Poverty is the economic state of most peoples of the world, and along with “failing to render godly stewardship” as Such points out, many problems that cause poverty are greed, as “the love of money,” is the “root of all evil,” as stated by Timothy (*KJV* 1798/2003, 1 Timothy 6:10) (Such, 2013, p. 7).

God Loves the Poor

Deuteronomy offers other commands and laws that protect the poor and outcasts. “He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loved the stranger, in giving him

food and raiment” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Deuteronomy 10:18). God gives common grace and demands that these groups are not oppressed: widows, orphans, strangers, or the poor. “And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Zechariah 7:10). “Mother Teresa, who was neither an economist nor a theologian, provided a glimpse of how we ought to see economic issues. ‘We have no right to judge the rich,’ she said. ‘For our part, what we desire is not a class struggle, but a class encounter, in which the rich save the poor, and the poor save the rich’” (Bradley, 2014, p. 251).

King Solomon writes, “If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter: for [he that is] higher than the highest regardeth; and [there be] higher than they” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Ecclesiastes 5:8). In the book of Exodus, it states, “Also thou shalt not oppress a stranger: for ye know the heart of a stranger, seeing ye were strangers in the land of Egypt” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Exodus 23:9).

Jesus taught people how to care for one another in the New Testament and Christ has plenty to say about caring about the poor and what His intentions are regarding those who ignore the mandate of love. Matthew 25:31-46 expresses the intensity of Jesus’ teachings. Jesus expresses that he will bless those who take care of the strangers, poor and prisoners.

(35) For I was a hungered, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: (36) Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. (37) Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee a hungered, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? (38) When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? (39) Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? (40) And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Matthew 25:31-40).

The book of James offers advice that is consistent with today's world, as well as the world he lived it. The desire for wealth is a fruitless endeavor in favor of the pursuit of spiritual wealth. The rich man who can't live without his money, will not be able to save himself; a continuing thread of truth throughout the scriptures. Faith without evidence of proper behavior and kindness to others, is faith that is useless and of no value. While works are never a necessary part of salvation, the good things Christians offer to the world and others, are a sign of our chosen lifestyle; to love and follow Christ and his example to the work on how to conduct one's life affairs and how to act towards one another.

James exhorts us to demand impartiality within the church and within our communities. Do not give the choice places to those with wealth, and ignore those without, he exhorts us; a classic problem in today's societies. James demonstrates with his examples that believers indeed judge others based on outer appearances instead of on inner character. He warns his people to bless, not curse, and asks the believer to put aside envy and strife in the believers hearts towards each other. James 2:1-5 states "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. 2 For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; 3 And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: 4 Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? 5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" (*KJV*, 1798/2003, James 2:1-5).

Caring for the unfortunate has always been and continues to be an activity many Christians participate in and will continue to be so. Believers should be willing to help scrub a

toilet, change a diaper, to be of assistance wherever and whenever possible. Servants of the Lord are to be willing to be available to God anytime, anywhere, and under any conditions. Believers are to bear each other's burdens; that is, to be involved in other people's pain and suffering and to try to be of comfort, all the while, offering the gospel of Jesus, through the Word. "Authority is pastoral care that can be found only in the servants of Jesus who seek no authority of their own, but who are Christians one to another, obedient to the authority of the Word," (Bonhoeffer, 1954, p. 3). Christians are to be servants of God and in doing so, serve one another in love. Understanding that God's believers are amongst the poor and homeless needs to be reaffirmed. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels [of compassion] from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (*KJV*, 1798/2003, 1 John 3:17).

Spiritual Ramifications

Adjusting to a homeless lifestyle can lead to a sense of hopelessness. Being homeless is hard on a person's body due to a lack of rest, depriving one of a deep sleep. It can be difficult trying to navigate rules on the street, rules from law enforcement and shelter rules, etc., but especially for those already mentally ill. And this is difficult on the spirit of a person. It can also be a learning curve, in that many people find Jesus, or find themselves learning to trust in him more for provision and safety.

To be without a home is to be without roots, without a place to rest and refresh one's being. Bouma-Prediger and Walsh believe that "roots," are important for a person's well-being. "Home is a rooted place from which we can orient ourselves, get our bearings, and find direction" (Bouma-Prediger, 2008, p. 65). The authors state, "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul. It is one of the hardest to define. A

human being has roots by virtue of his real, active, and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living space certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future” (Bouma-Prediger, 2008, p. 65). People need a home to feel grounded in the world.

Christian leaders and educators have a duty and a responsibility to demonstrate Christian ethics and values in the way they approach teaching others about the gospel, and how their lives are lived. The scriptures say that all people are made in the image of God, and that God’s image never changes. Christians should show God’s love by treating all people equally and with dignity. By treating people with love. Kilner states, “...help show people the extent of God’s love by the way that Christians uphold the life and dignity of all — even the down and dejected, the needy and neglected, the ruined and rejected” (Kilner, 2015, p. 330).

This means being kind, compassionate, and understanding that many people’s circumstances and being homeless are not of their own making. By seeing people as having value as human beings, and by understanding the reasons for homelessness, perhaps society can begin to find real solutions. Cloud states, “...if they are valued as people, then they are to be treated as we treat the ones who really do matter to us, with care, concern, and intent to do good, not harm. We treat them as we would want to be treated” (Cloud, n.d.).

Because the “least of these” are important to Jesus, they must also be important to God’s people. As Howard Thurman wrote,

The basic fact that Christianity as it was born in the mind of this Jewish teacher and thinker appears as a technique of survival for the oppressed. That it became through the intervening years, a religion of the powerful and the dominant, used sometimes as an instrument of oppression, must not tempt us into believing that it was thus in the mind and life of Jesus. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. Whenever his spirit appears, the oppressed find fresh courage; for he announced the good news that fear, hypocrisy, and hatred, the three hounds of hell that track the trail of the disinherited, need have no dominion over them (Thurman, 1997, p. 18).

Faith Based Assistance

Many Christian churches and nonprofit faith-based organizations spend tremendous time and resources in caring for the homeless all across this country and helping them recover their roots in their communities. There are many national organizations that do wonderful work in the restoration of people's lives. Many smaller organizations and ministries throughout the country offer help by giving the basics of food, clothing, and shelter. Then there are churches and other organizations that offer more than just the basics. Some offer job training and housing assistance. Drug addiction programs are also available for those needing that type of assistance. Gas money, bus passes, and even a message phone can make the difference between someone being able to climb out of homelessness and abject poverty and then beginning to feel like a human being with dignity and a sense of purpose again.

Americans are aware of large faith-based organizations like the Salvation Army. Bass explains, "The Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center ministries in the United States provide an in-residence rehabilitation program with a focus on basic necessities. Today, the Salvation Army provides a host of reintegration services for homeless people among other services" (Bass, 2007, p. 318). There are many local, homegrown organizations doing great work with the homeless, like The Good News Rescue Mission in Redding, California. The only local homeless shelter in the city, GNRM's director, Jon Anderson states,

Oppression exists in the hearts of all and is not based on economic status. In the midst of our most oppressive moments in life, what we crave more than anything is to be unconditionally loved and to be able to love unconditionally. How often though do we place a condition upon love, especially upon those who are currently in the midst of a bitter oppression? No one will be hated into healing and restoration. As a society, true healing happens when we look past a person's economic status, dismantle our judgments, see their hurt and love them into restoration. Our aim is to create a community of love where oppression no longer exists (GNRM, 2020, para. 1).

Oppression is destructive. Poverty and homelessness can be devastating to the person or family experiencing it. However, people are valuable to God. Every human being is one of God's children and can be redeemed by the gospel of Jesus Christ. When Christians love the strangers; the homeless, the mentally ill, the illegal, the aged, they love God. Cloud stated, "People of grace leave others better off than how they found them, even when they were getting nothing in return" (Cloud, n.d.). Babcock agrees and asserts, "When God leads us to help someone, He knows them and us. Sometimes people act out of the goodness of their heart and not with any discernment or common sense" (Babcock, 2007, p. 43).

It is noteworthy that when Christians love others who are God's outcasts, they are demonstrating *agape* love. That is, "...to be unconditionally committed to the well-being of another. It is sacrificial, seeks not its own (1 Corinthians 13), is gracious and forgiving, spontaneous and joyful" (Hiebert, 2008, p. 292). It is a joy to see lives restored, families united, and people in dire straits being helped into a better situation, with prayer, scriptures, and love. It is imperative that an understanding of human beings made in the image of God be adhered to and be promoted properly. "And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (KJV, 1798/2003, Matthew 25:40). This saying from Jesus is very telling when it comes to the *imago Dei*. This passage discusses who the "least of these" are. The people who hungered and were fed. The thirsty who were given drink. The naked who were clothed. The sick and the prisoners who were visited. Believers have to assume that Jesus saw great "sacredness" (Kilner, p. 315) in the least of these to align himself with them. The scriptures make it abundantly clear how we should view the poor. "...every human being is made in God's image and should be accorded the rights and dignity appropriate to that status" (Bradley, 2014, p. 345). Bradley

continues, “We do not have the power to establish God’s kingdom in its fullness, but our work on earth should be a precursor to the kingdom to come. Absolute poverty degrades and prevents people from fulfilling God’s commands to be fruitful and multiply. We should do whatever we can to help restore them” (Bradley, 2014, p. 345).

A Summary of Theological Framework

Upon discovery of the historical, theological, and biblical aspects of this doctrine, one finds this idea of humanity made *imago Dei* has been used to both oppress and liberate people throughout history. Kilner quotes Teel when he relates, “The notion of the human person as made in the image and likeness of God . . . [at times] has been disastrous: . . . [it has made it] dangerously easy to dismiss some individual persons and groups of people as less human than others. . . . (Kilner, p. 22). Christians can instill in people a belief in their own value, and the value of others in God’s Kingdom, and in God’s creation. Homelessness and poverty are part and parcel of life and as Jesus dictated, “the poor you have with you always,” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Mark 14:7).

God’s creation is in a fallen state due to the fallen state of man’s heart. Believers are given the Holy Spirit to guide them into a life that is starkly different than the ways of the world. The homeless are now the dejected, the outcasts, the unloved and the unwanted. God expects and demands that believers in Christ adhere to a tenet in which every person has value to God and every person needs the saving message of hope of the gospel. This is the job of the believer. To seek out the poor and downtrodden and to offer hope by offering the gospel. There is no other purpose for the existence of the Christian except to worship God. Giving the gospel to the poor is exactly what Jesus said he was here for. “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to

preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (KJV, 1798/2003, Luke 4:18).

Theoretical Framework for the Study

While anticipating what the future holds for the American economy in a post Covid 19 environment, understanding the causes of homelessness can be key in fostering love and care among people for those facing oppressive poverty. Society has seen faith-based solutions as key in assisting the restoration of people to their communities by sharing the gospel, and friendship, along with the basic necessities of life. Drug abuse, domestic violence, alcoholism, and petty crimes are just some of the activities that occur where poverty is. People need to see that while homelessness creates problems that are damaging to communities, there are many people who need to hear the Word of God. A good practical theology would dictate that Christians need to assist the poor and homeless just to remain humble about their own lives of comfort. Instead of judging, the believer needs to be actively involved in standing for the oppressed of one’s community.

Galatians 6:2 states, “*Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ*” (KJV, 1798/2003, Galatians 6:2). The law of Christ is a law of forbearance. Forbearance means enduring and suffering. The other person isn’t a burden to the Christian because Christians are called to suffer with one another. Only as a burden is the other really a brother or sister and not an object to be controlled. “We are obliged to suffer with one another because those that bear with others know that they, themselves, are being borne and only in this strength can they bear others” (Bonhoeffer, 1954, p. 97).

And while Christians remain secluded in their churches, and some in opulent and rich settings, the poor are waiting for love and concern about their wellbeing to be cared for by

someone, especially those who claim to speak for Jesus. Many Christians, however, blame the person for their position, instead of having sympathy and realizing that no one deserves to be homeless, however, some people chose to be, just due to their circumstances of a fixed income that will not allow for a fixed residence.

A practical theology would determine that scriptures be adhered to when operating in life as a Christian. Loving one another and loving our enemies as ourselves are two of the commands of Jesus that should be operational in every Christian's life (*KJV*, 1798/2003, John 15:12, Matthew 5:43-44). Without an everyday application of scriptural truths, what good is the gospel?

Practical theology would say that you can't make disciples out of people you don't know anything about. James said one would know one's faith by his works. "...when we come to the question of knowing God, the Bible plunges us into caring for those he cares for, and thus into living with a concrete concern for the poor, the weak and those who suffer" (Kapic, 2013, Location No. 721). Kapic continues, "Pride has lost sight of the gap between the holy Creator and sinful humanity, producing self-absorption and contempt for others. Humility has a vision of God's majesty, love, and forgiveness in Christ, producing love for God and one's neighbors (Phil 2:1-5). How we treat others...living neighbors...reveals a great deal about how we view ourselves before God (1 Jn 3:10-17; 4:7-21) (Kapic, 2013, Location No. 608).

Other obstacles, such as architectural effects like spikes on benches and barbed wire under bridges keeps the homeless from laying down or from hiding, making them a subculture group separate from the larger population of housed people (Mutuli, February 9, 2023). This growing group of American citizens is becoming polarized and is in danger from the hatred that stems from the housed population, who see the homeless as trouble making criminals who are destructive and are to be feared. Most people have the NIMBY (Not in my backyard) attitude

and simply want the homeless removed from their sight, their streets, their neighborhood, and their community.

When it gets down to the nitty gritty, all have the capacity to become homeless. Many people are as they say, one paycheck away from losing it all. When considering disasters as making one homeless, the wildfires of the West, the hurricanes of the coastal areas in the South and East, along with tornadoes in the middle part of the country, the scenarios needed to become homeless are there. And while most people in disasters are given something to allow them to be housed, if not just a FEMA trailer, homelessness will be the fate for some. One day you're an upstanding pillar of your community, with a mortgage, a family, and an occupation. The next day, you're a trouble maker who has no home, maybe no family, and no job. You've just become one of forgotten, the unloved, the problem.

The fires in Hawaii or Paradise, California, wiped out whole communities. Many people are forced off their home insurance policies and have to sell their properties and many never own a home again. Many people may have to leave the area, just to find housing, maybe with relatives or friends who live elsewhere. People may have to find a new job, as businesses have also burned or have been destroyed. The lesson is to never feel secure in anything but your relationship with Jesus. But for the unfortunates to know this truth, it has to be offered to them, in action and from the Word. It is the Christian's job to understand that one is to share the gospel, to give away the love of Christ, and to assist in edification of their neighbor, who is everyone.

A Summary of Theoretical Framework

With poverty and homelessness sweeping the nation, along with the economic effects of racial unrest and Covid 19, it is expected that these problems will continue to grow. And with

this growth of poverty, more desperation, homelessness, and hopelessness will occur within the country. The poor and mostly minorities suffer, not only from a lack of attention to their physical needs, but also neglect of their spiritual wellbeing because of improper and judgmental views by the very people who should care. Considering the views of most people regarding personal responsibility, including mainstream Christians, Such states, “Churches oriented to a middle-class system value self-improvement and frequently shun homeless people on the basis of social traits evidenced in dress, demeanor, behavior and conversation” (Such, 2013, p. 5).

When fellow citizens by the thousands are being forced to live in squalid encampments, in RV’s on the side of the road, and along the riverbanks of the nation, how can one not be moved as a Christian? America has traditionally created missionary endeavors to other countries for the sole purpose of lifting people out of poverty and to offer the gospel. Perhaps what we need in America are some missionary endeavors to do the same here. And although many do, all churches should consider sending out missionaries to offer shelter, food, and clothing in the streets of Los Angeles, Seattle, New York, and other major cities inundated with homeless people and give them the hope offered by the gospel. Or perhaps in their own little hometowns.

We need more pastors like Pastor Jeremiah Steepek.. Pastors who will call their congregations to taking real action. Pastors who will recognize that the answer to social problems is the same today and always. Jesus Christ and the gospel of hope he offers, not political shenanigans that lead to shame and disgust. Jesus is our answer to an ailing America. We must be truthful about what the bible says.

Related Literature

The projections are dire. Economists say the problem of homelessness is approaching proportions not seen since the days of the Great Depression. This year’s recent Covid 19

economic fallout regarding job losses along with housing constraints dictate that homelessness and poverty will increase. Homelessness is an experience most people don't want to have. Many faith-based organizations are doing the work of caring for homeless people even as our nation faces unprecedented events. When one is homeless, having no place to rest, to cook, or even to clean one's body or clothes is extremely difficult, especially for those who live within the inner cities where resources are stretched thin. People need toilet facilities, shower facilities, access to laundry or clean clothes and clean bedding in order to stave off illness, scabies, and lice. Being homeless in America is a difficult proposition. Along with the indignity of having no shower or toilet, "Homelessness is more than a lack of shelter: it is powerlessness and lack of control over one's life" (Bouma-Prediger, 2008, p. 146). When people are physically hurting, they are not ready to receive the gospel in many instances. Meeting physical needs can be imperative to meeting spiritual needs.

Homelessness Will Grow

Closed parks and patrolled streets are only some of the problems the homeless deal with within the cities around the country. No available shelter beds, combined with negative attitudes from many housed people, many homeless people find themselves literally between a rock and a hard place. The homeless make many people uncomfortable and are seen as a problem to be tackled, mostly through law enforcement measures and one to be put out of sight.

A lack of homeless resources helps in fostering the other social ills, i.e., drug and alcohol addiction, petty crimes, and a sense of hopelessness and depression. Bass states, "Most homeless people in America are transitionally homeless, meaning that they are poor people, and, because of lack of resources or bad timing, they are temporarily residing in a shelter or are living on the street. Most homeless families are in this category. Intact families make up 24% of families in

shelters” (Bass, 2007, p. 315). Many people are living from paycheck to paycheck, and any number of events could see them in a free fall towards homelessness. However, most advocates for the homeless and low income see the major problem as clearly a lack of affordable housing availability and lower levels of greatly needed, subsidized, government instituted housing.

Babcock writes, “Sometimes all it takes to create homelessness is a shortage of rental units. In June of 2016, a study showed that Los Angeles needed an additional 382,000 rental units to keep up with demand” (Babcock, 2007, p. 11). This situation has gotten worse, and a lack of affordable housing is the agreed upon crux of America’s homeless crisis, albeit with different reasonings. Cleveland affirms Bass’s contention.

...there is a lack of housing. They also agree on the one approach that has clearly proved effective: providing free, permanent supportive housing for mentally or physically ill, substance-abusing chronically homeless people. Beyond that, conservatives and liberals propose different remedies. Conservatives emphasize freeing local housing markets from stifling regulation. Liberals emphasize coercing markets to increase the supply of “affordable” housing by various means, including rent control and obstacles to gentrification”. Such approaches amount to treating symptoms. They do not address the larger problem that, due to growing inequality, a substantial portion of U.S. residents are housing insecure in that they cannot easily afford minimal housing (Cleveland, 2020, para. 6).

According to Cleveland the problem is wealth inequality in America, while Babcock believes a substantial, continuous lack of care for veterans, the mentally ill, and other groups contributes to the issue of homelessness. Babcock advocates for Christian solutions, while Cleveland believes politicians should fix the problems by increasing the minimum wage, as Cleveland demonstrates that many people simply can’t afford the rents that are available. “Neither conservatives or liberals address the big question: why such a large fraction of the U.S. population, at least the 12 percent below the miserable family poverty line of \$26,000 a year, are paying 50 percent or more of their incomes for inadequate housing, leaving them at risk of eviction and a stint in a shelter” (Cleveland, 2020, para. 56) or years on the street.

Whether people are homeless, due to lack of affordable housing or low wages, a lack of mental health treatment, drug addiction, alcoholism, domestic abuse, or any number of other reasons, everyone wants a home. However, there is a small number of chronically homeless people who “have chosen to embrace their economic circumstances,” and adapt, “to a homeless lifestyle” (Babcock, 2007, p. 30). Many of these people are mentally ill or drug addicts.

Basic Needs of the Homeless

Homelessness is an experience most people don’t want to have. Many faith-based organizations are doing the work of caring for homeless people even as our nation faces unprecedented events. When one is homeless, having no place to rest, to cook, or even to clean one’s body or clothes is extremely difficult, especially for those who live within the inner cities where resources are stretched thin. People need toilet facilities, shower facilities, access to laundry or clean clothes and clean bedding in order to stave off illness, scabies, and lice. Homeless women are a particularly vulnerable group and can be subject to specific circumstances of health endangerment.

A study done in Boston revealed that “while a majority of persons expressed appropriate hygiene-related self-care activities, a focused minority—persons who sleep outdoors and those who engage in substance use—experience reduced hygiene and self-care challenges” (Leibler, J., Nguyen, D. D., Leon, C. Gaeta, J., and D. Perez, 2007, pg. 7, para. 2). The mentally ill also struggle with navigating shelter systems as “street sleeping, the strongest of which is mental illness, as well as the reduced access to facilities associated with homelessness services, such as shelters” leave some people without the ability to care for themselves properly. “For some *mentally ill* individuals, shared living areas and sanitation facilities feel unsafe and uncomfortable, which in turn may drive these persons to sleep outdoors” (Leibler, J, et al., 2007,

p. 6, para. 2). Keeping oneself clean and being able to rest is a requirement for all human beings to survive and thrive. Many shelter systems offer showers, clothing banks, and laundry facilities. Redding, California has such a program called Free Laundry Day, (Free, 2020, para. 1).

However, the Boston researchers asserted,

Hygiene behaviors among people experiencing homelessness likely reflect the availability of sanitation facilities, perception as to the safety or usability of these facilities, as well as personal practices. Our standardized questionnaire tool, while useful for generating preliminary data, was not adequate to address the multiple, interacting factors that give rise to how people feel about their environments and how they engage in self-care. Given the complexity of drivers of self-care behaviors, a qualitative study would be best suited to disentangle the motivations for hygiene practices in this population and is recommended. Despite these limitations, this study engaged in in-person interviews of an understudied and vulnerable population already engaged within the health care system. The demographics of study participants parallel those of the Boston Health Care for the Homeless clinic patient population more generally, indicating a random sample (Leibler, J, et al., 2007, p. 7, para. 1).

As the economy worsens during this time of the Covid 19 pandemic, and more people find themselves homeless with less available resources, the pandemic is creating an additional population without access to food, water, and hygiene necessities such as a toilet and shower. Remember the run-on hand sanitizer during the pandemic? As America struggles through the pandemic, it was interesting to note that the researchers found, “Use of hand sanitizer is nearly universal in this population (89%) (Leibler, J, et al., 2007, pg. 7, para. 5). Interestingly enough, many homeless people protect themselves from disease and the fact that covid didn’t spread through this population is quite surprising.

Having proper nutrition may prove to be difficult for some in the future, as there are still long food lines in many areas of the United States. The Food Research and Action Center (FRAC) conducted a study and as of July 2020 stated, The analysis, conducted by Northwestern University economist Diane Schanzenbach, is based on Census Bureau data recorded between April and July. The data captures a narrower, more severe definition of hunger than the typical

measure used by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which is food insecurity. That term reflects a range of hardships, including not having enough money for groceries, or changing eating patterns to make up for a lack of resources. This year, an estimated 54 million people in the U.S. will be food insecure, which represents a massive leap from 35 million people in 2019 (Bloch, 2020, para. 8).

Many people have been adversely affected by the pandemic in a myriad of ways, and food insecurity is just one way. FRAC declares, “These are folks who had fairly steady incomes,” says Luis Giardia, president of FRAC, a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit. “And now, all of a sudden, they’re visiting food banks” (Bloch, 2020, para. 7). FRAC states, “As minivans inch through parking lots, and bread lines snake around city blocks, food banks and charities are not equipped to handle the need of millions of newly famished Americans” (Bloch, 2020, para. 12). Now that many more housed people face food insecurity, the homeless have even less resources available.

Another issue the homeless face is a lack of adequate rest, and especially REM sleep, which is conducive to healing the physical body. Just about anyone whose stayed up for many hours working can attest that a lack of sleep can lead to a dip in one’s performance. “There is a growing focus on sleep as a critical component of population health. Sleep is considered to be “one of the three pillars of a healthy lifestyle” that also includes diet and exercise. Potential health consequences of sleep disturbance include energy imbalance, obesity, cardiovascular disorders, hypertension, metabolic derangements, type 2 diabetes, cognitive impairment, immune dysfunction, osteoporosis, cancer, and increased mortality from all causes. Adequate sleep is critical for memory consolidation, cognitive function, and overall brain health. Sleep deprivation can result in epigenetic changes in gene expression that can impair brain function and health”

(Brewer-Smyth, K., Kafonek, K. and Koenig, H. 2020, para. 5). As one can't sleep, their mental faculties can slip and cause more difficulties.

The Sleep Foundation states “Without sufficient sleep, your body makes fewer cytokines, a type of protein that targets infection and inflammation, effectively creating an immune response. Cytokines are both produced and released during sleep, causing a double whammy if you skimp on shut eye. Chronic sleep loss even makes the flu vaccine less effective by reducing your body's ability to respond” (Sleep, 2020. para. 2). Sleep is essential to good health and a necessity to stave off a vast array of ailments. The Sleep Foundation states regarding Covid 19, “With such unprecedented changes coming on so quickly, it's understandable that the importance of sleep is flying under the radar. But as we adjust to stay-at-home orders and try to remain healthy in a time of COVID-19, focusing on sleeping well offers tremendous benefits. Sleep is critical to physical health and effective functioning of the immune system. It's also a key promoter of emotional wellness and mental health, helping to beat back stress, depression, and anxiety” (Sleep, 2020, para. 1). Sleep is fundamental to good health.

Having a religious or spiritual belief can be beneficial for sleep as well. A study done regarding homeless women and sleep was conducted by Dr. Kathleen Brewer-Smyth regarding sleep and the ability to create an atmosphere for forgiveness. “Forgiveness, often associated with R/S (*religion/spirituality*), has been defined as “an active process in which you make a conscious decision to let go of negative feelings whether the person deserves it or not . . . by choosing to offer compassion and empathy to the person who wronged you”. Letting go of a grudge, bitterness, resentment, or revenge through forgiveness can play an important role in sleep and health (Brewer-Smyth, K, et. al, 2020, p. 49, para. 4). The church can be beneficial in teaching people about forgiving and accepting forgiveness.

Brewer-Smyth's research states, "Homeless females are a vulnerable population that is increasing in number, and factors related to their health disparities need to be better understood to develop effective interventions. Between 38% and 42% of homeless persons are female in the region of the United States where this study was conducted, and many have children" (Brewer-Smyth, 2020, p. 49 para. 3). Elderly women are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population.

Faith based organizations play a part in helping people understand the forgiveness of God for sins, through faith in Jesus Christ, and this can allow the person to forgive themselves or others for wrongs. Part of the study's conclusions were, "It is clear that helping persons overcome the negative mental health effects of victimization by letting go of un-forgiveness is essential to overall health and well-being. Sleep may be an important mechanism through which forgiveness exerts positive benefits on the health of female victims of abuse (Brewer-Smyth, 2020, p. 53, para.1). Spiritual well-being can be essential in softening the effects of homelessness.

Faith-Based Offerings

There have been mixed studies regarding the importance of faith based helping organizations vs. those that are secular. "Human warehouses in many cities now provide food and warm lodging to individuals without providing them with opportunities to overcome the desperate conditions that are the root causes of their homelessness The truth is many homeless shelters [and transitional housing programs] exist more for the public than for the homeless. They ease the public's conscience and shove the problem out of sight" says Rogers (N. E. Rogers, J. Bowie, R. E. Gordon, 1999, p. 237, para. 1). To place this population out of sight is the desired result for many citizens.

Interestingly, the study continues, “Faith-based providers are often less concerned with individual rights than are government providers. This “tough love” approach is a common element of many faith-based programs. Faith-based providers not only emphasize employment and fiscal responsibility, but they also mandate discipline and provide structure. Activities such as routine drug tests, bible study, lifestyle guidance, and life skills education help to create an environment in which the recipient recognizes his/her responsibility for rehabilitation” (Rogers, 1999, p. 237, para. 3). Some faith-based organizations also “take over the handling of recipients’ finances as a part of the contract to provide services. While this certainly appears Draconian in nature, the intent is to teach financial management and speed up the process to self-sufficiency” (Rogers, 1999, p. 238, para. 1). Some programs exist for job training, child rearing and other needed skills.

Political Bedfellows

The treatment of the homeless has placed Shasta County in the NLCHP’s Hall of Shame (NLCHP, December 2019, p. 58). The *Housing Not Handcuffs* report states that Redding gained its listing due to a proposed involuntary detention of homeless people. The report states,

Redding, California, is a rural community in northern California’s Shasta County, which is home to some 827 homeless people, and far fewer emergency shelter beds. In response to rising homelessness, Redding Mayor Julie Winter sent a letter to California Governor Gavin Newsom asking for him to declare a state of emergency over homelessness and calling for the ability to, ‘hold [homeless] individuals accountable’ by, ‘[requiring] mental health treatment for the severely mentally ill, up to and including conservatorship until such time as the individual has demonstrated the ability to care for themselves including managing their finances’. In an interview with Jefferson Public Radio about the letter, Mayor Winter elaborated by saying she wishes to build a shelter where she can force people experiencing homelessness to stay for up to 90 days: ‘[It] might be a low-security facility, but it’s not a facility you could just leave because you wanted to... You need to get clean; you need to get sober; you need to demonstrate self-sufficiency. And once you do that, you’re free to go’ (NLCHP, December 2019, p. 58-59).

Winter, a Bethel church elder, had the postmillennial theological teachings about poverty in mind when she devised this plan (Bethel, 2021). An excerpt of the letter to Governor Newsom states,

Nestled in the north end of the Sacramento Valley, the City of Redding is known for its proximity to the headwaters of the Sacramento River and has been named a “Top 10 Fishing Town in North America,” an “Unofficial Capital of Kayaking,” and the “Gem of the U.S. Trail System”. The Sacramento River provides quality water to the citizens of our state and is home to sensitive fisheries safeguarding a variety of endangered species. Our City takes aggressive measures to minimize untreated storm water entering the river, lest we be fined by the State. Yet, we have as many as 3,000 homeless individuals (per Shasta Community Health Center reporting data) in our City, many of whom camp along the River causing pollution of various sources to enter into sensitive waterways. The City sees this as a potential environmental catastrophe with limited to no ability to prohibit and/or prevent illegal camping (Winter, November 19, 2019).

The idea of 3,000 people camping along the Sacramento River in Redding, destroying the river is an exaggeration, to say the least, especially when the 2019 NorCal CoC reports only 827 people homeless in Redding were counted (Shasta County Community Action Agency, 2019). However, in order to circumvent people camping at an exceedingly small city park by the river, this became the reason why people couldn’t camp in this public space. “‘It’s basically chemicals that are ending up in our watershed,’ the hapless official stated”. The article continues “As a taxpayer and a supporter of the Constitution, I’m sure you can agree that chemicals, such as household chemicals, feces, illicit drugs, these are all impacting our watershed. We have some of the cleanest water in the world and my job is to secure that” (Scheide, 2019, para. 39). Never mind the river has been flowing since the beginning of Creation and no doubt, many people from Native Americans to early pioneers, and 49er’s seeking gold have camped along the Sacramento River in the past, utilizing the vast waterway.

City ordinances prohibited people to take advantage of the 9th U.S. District Court ruling that explicitly prohibits “cruel and unusual punishment” of the homeless. The order states, “Turning to the merits, the panel held that the Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause of the Eighth Amendment precluded the enforcement of a statute prohibiting sleeping outside against homeless individuals with no access to alternative shelter. The panel held that, as long as there is no option of sleeping indoors, the government cannot criminalize indigent, homeless people for sleeping outdoors, on public property, on the false premise they had a choice in the matter” (Martin vs. Boise, 2020). More than ever, faith-based organizations need to focus on the poor and neglected of our city streets. God’s love needs to be preached and taught throughout the nation by those who love Jesus and the life-giving properties of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Homes for the Homeless

Many sources blame a lack of affordable housing as the number one reason for homelessness, so despite negative views regarding the homeless, many people simply have no opportunities for affordable housing. A national poll conducted by Opportunity Starts at Home found that “the vast majority of the public, on a bipartisan basis, believes the government should provide emergency rental assistance for people who are struggling to afford the rent and are at serious risk of eviction as a result of the coronavirus outbreak (93% favor); expand funding for homeless assistance programs that minimize the number of people living in large shelters by providing them with alternative individual spaces for isolation and self-quarantine (90% favor); and enact a uniform, nationwide policy that stops all evictions during the coronavirus outbreak (89% favor) “ (NLIHC, May 28, 2020). This program has recently ended.

As Covid-19 infections seem to be winding down and the nation approaches a post-pandemic phase in society, the issue of the abatement of homelessness is still paramount, even

more so as the federal moratorium on evictions has been overruled by the 6th Federal District Court (Weiss). It is not hard to imagine that many more people will suffer homelessness in the extremely near future due to this ruling. Projects Roomkey and Homekey in California provide temporary housing and plans for permanent homes for the state's homeless population.

Project Roomkey was a program instilled by the state of California to house homeless people through the pandemic, and Project Homekey is the program that gives hope in transitioning to a permanent home (CDSS, 2020). "The Project Roomkey and Rehousing Strategy is designed to quickly provide dedicated resources to ensure Project Roomkey units remain online through the continued public health emergency and that homelessness is non-recurring. Project Roomkey units are intended to be temporary, emergency shelter options, while also serving as a pathway to permanent housing" (CDSS, 2020).

As of May 2021, HUD has allocated 5 billion dollars to meet these permanent housing needs (HUD, 2021). In the press release, HUD national secretary, Marcia L. Fudge stated, "Homelessness in the United States was increasing even before COVID-19, and we know the pandemic has only made the crisis worse," said Fudge. "HUD's swift allocation of this \$5 billion in American Rescue Plan funding reflects our commitment to addressing homelessness as a priority. With this strong funding, communities across the country will have the resources needed to give homes to the people who have had to endure the COVID-19 pandemic without one" (HUD, 2021). Redding has been allocated \$1,597,470 for permanent housing for the homeless (HUD, 2021). Along with stimulus packages available to all adults and children, homeless persons are allowed to apply with the IRS for their payments, by filing a 2020 tax return even without employment (Oreskes, April 8, 2021), some monetary relief, as well as housing opportunities are forthcoming.

California, in 2020, became the first state in the nation to introduce legislation that recognizes having a home as a human right (NHLC). “Assembly Constitutional Amendment 10 (ACA-10) states: “The fundamental human right to housing is hereby declared to exist in this state. This right ensures access to adequate housing for all Californians. This right is exclusively enforceable by a public right of action. It is the shared obligation of state and local jurisdictions to respect, protect, and fulfill this right through progressively implemented measures, consistent with available resources, within an aggressive but reasonable time frame” (NHLC).

Summary

The Related Literature portion of this research reveals the fact that there is not enough low-income housing to meet the needs of the millions of Americans who need it. There are at least five points to make. First, the economic landscape almost guarantees an increase in homelessness (Babcock, 2007; Cleveland, 2020). Second, the homeless on the streets continue to suffer as resources are scant and without housing, there is always the need to move to around to secure resources, bathrooms, and a place to sleep (Leibler, J., Nguyen, D. D., Leon, C. Gaeta, J., and D. Perez, 2007). To point three, churches, while many do a lot to assist the homeless, many more do not (Rogers, 1999). Fourth, politically, the homeless situation is considered rife with corruption or is just an annoyance issue that offer no clear or easy answers and it therefore easily put on the back burner until now in California.. And at the heart of the problem, is the lack of suitable, available, and affordable housing for the poor (CDSS, 2020).

Together, these issues present a complex problem with no easy solutions. The focus of this research was to discern how civic and church leaders’ feelings about the homeless assist in helping or hurting the population in their respective communities.

Rationale for the Study and a Gap in the Literature

The problem is that in the intertwining aspects of postmodern theology and the desire to conquer evil, the biblical mandate to serve the poor has been laid aside. Without conversation regarding other, less convenient truths about poverty, the systematic causes, and the societal ills that occur because of poverty, no attention is paid to the structural causes. Causes such as a lack of affordable housing, addictions, domestic abuse, unemployment, racial discrimination, lack of education or adequate medical care, and other situations faced by believers and non-believers alike, sometimes the suffering that occurs is not the fault of the one stricken with poverty. Such states, “Suffering is integral in the Christian life as a means of a continued conformity to Christ’s death started through experience of baptism which means that Christians cannot escape the consequences of their sin without sharing in the suffering of Christ’s death” (Such, 2013, p. 10).

The Lausanne Movement, started by Reverend Billy Graham in 1970, on their website *about* section, has this to say about their organizational goal: “...we continue to envision and work toward a world in which there is: The gospel for every person, An evangelical church for every people, Christ-like leaders for every church, and a Kingdom impact in every sphere of society ” (Lausanne Movement, 2009, para. 7). A noble vision and one that most Christians would not argue is imperative to the Great Commission. The organization states,

We recognize that Prosperity Teaching flourishes in contexts of terrible poverty, and that for many people, it presents their only hope, in the face of constant frustration, the failure of politicians and NGOs, etc., for a better future, or even for a more bearable present. We are angry that such poverty persists, and we affirm the Bible’s view that it also angers God and that it is not his will that people should live in abject poverty. We acknowledge and confess that in many situations the Church has lost its prophetic voice in the public arena. However, we do not believe that Prosperity Teaching provides a helpful or biblical response to the poverty of the people among whom it flourishes. And we observe that much of this teaching has come from North American sources where people are not materially poor in the same way (Lausanne Movement, 2009, para. 5),

There exists a gap in the literature surrounding attitudes about homelessness in America and how this can relate to how policies are formed. The church, while not silent on homelessness, per se, has been quiet on changing attitudes towards the poor by the church, itself, and this researcher seeks to close the gap on general attitudes towards the homeless population. There is also a literary gap regarding the general public's feelings and attitudes towards the homeless population. A growing minority group in America, the homeless have no voice and this researcher will offer a platform with this study.

For example, in a study between Canadian and American evangelicals and their faith-based activities for the poor, Bean states, "Canadian evangelicals see faith-based compassion as an extension of government-led efforts to fight poverty and overlay secular government programs with religious meaning. Evangelicals are not easily crowded out by government programs because their subculture thrives by sustaining distinction from—and engagement with—the larger society (Smith 1998). In the United States, evangelicals define their identity by denigrating government programs (Bean, 2014, p. 183).

In other words, in this study, evangelicals who are American can easily refuse to help those on welfare and other government programs, because they believe government programs promote the idea of handouts and laziness. So their compassion for the homeless can often be wrapped up in political views about poverty. Jen Sky, one of the founders of Mission from Mars, a ministry in Pittsburg stated,

The people we were helping had a face. They had a name. They had a story. They had a family. They were asking us for prayer so that they could continue. They wanted hope that they could make it through one more cold night. That they could save enough to change their circumstances – that they could change their lives. Each and every one of us could relate. We could imagine running into a tough time and losing everything. What if we lost a job? What if we were sued and couldn't pay the debt? What-ifs swilling in our heads, we were being

changed by the homeless. They began to look like people, like friends, like neighbors, and it kept us up at night (Sky, 2011, p. 65).

Many people only see problems that need to be solved when they see the homeless. It is important to educate the housed about the homeless and to remind them to love and care for others.

Profile of the Current Study

This research study reveals the feelings and emotions that people who work with the homeless have about their work. The participants included government officials, homeless advocates, and pastors. They discussed their experiences in a manner that was respectful of the homeless population as a whole, however, when it comes to responsibility, many interviewees would like to see more church and government participation in assisting the homeless, not just moving them out of sight as an appeasement for the housed populations of their communities. This study helps to explain the real needs of the homeless, as seen through the eyes of those responsible for assisting this population.

The researcher used the qualitative approach with a phenomenological methodology to answer the research questions. Creswell explains qualitative methods available to the researcher include focus groups, observations, and interviews. A small sample size is used, and qualitative information seeks more to describe a problem rather than to measure the problem (Creswell, 2018, p. 188). An average of eleven questions were asked of the eleven participants. Audio taped interviews were conducted and transcribed. The interviews ranged from one to two hours long. A few participants were met with more than once to reiterate or add to the information gleaned by the researcher. The setting was where the participants primarily operate. This included offices, churches and coffee shops near homeless shelters or encampments.

The main purpose of the research was to determine whether or not the spiritual needs of homeless individuals was met. The literature review indicates that a good and practical theology would dictate that Christians need to assist the poor and homeless just to remain humble about their own lives of comfort. Instead of judging, the believer needs to be actively involved in standing for the oppressed of one's community.

Christians are obligated according to scripture to care for the poor, homeless, and marginalized in society and have the opportunity to assist in the need for restoration and reconciliation of the homeless by the act of forgiveness. Whether from one person to another or from one to God, Himself, redemption from sin is the effect of the gospel and should be in the forefront of whatever situation one finds themselves in concerning other people. People should have discussions involving redemption through one's faith in Christ, the need to forgive oneself and others for offenses, and the ability for self-reflection and spiritual discernment that can lessen the pains of homelessness. Chapter three discusses the methodology used to conduct this study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This phenomenological study sought to bring an understanding to the issue of homelessness by exposing attitudes or views in regards to policy making that affects the homeless population. Whether in terms of services, municipal ordinances, or transitional and permanent housing, by determining varying views towards homelessness, the researcher was able to determine if attitudes reflected a positive willingness to help the homeless population. The setting for this phenomenological study was Redding California and the neighboring city of Chico, California. With a similarly sized population, this researcher sought to see if there were comparable attitudes.

Research Design Synopsis

In this chapter the researcher explains the research design, where the settings for this phenomenological research took place, who participated, the role of the researcher, ethical considerations and data collection methodology and instruments used in this study. This will be followed by a discussion of collection methods, instruments and protocols used in the research, and procedural particulars regarding data analysis and methods used. A discussion regarding trustworthiness of the research and a summary will round out this chapter.

The Problem

Homelessness is on the rise in the nation and Shasta County, California, is no exception. In this post pandemic environment, an examination of what happens next is essential to the wellbeing of the homeless population. With 5 billion Housing and Urban Development (HUD) being allocated for nationwide homelessness (HUD, 2021, para.1), and some 18 million of that American Rescue Act funding coming to the city of Redding (Chandler, 2021, para. 1), it will be a challenge for city officials to decide how to spend the city's share and whether any of the

funding will be used to assist the local homeless population. A look at present circumstances will determine future efforts. For comparison's sake, an examination of the neighboring city, Chico, and their efforts to solve their own homeless problem was also addressed.

In Shasta County, and especially in the city of Redding, in northern California, the homeless population is often scorned and blamed for multiple crimes and property destruction (Jack, 2017). Mayer and Reichert state, "... high *crime* rates are driven by homeless individuals who commit minor 'survival crimes'. Studies have shown that homeless individuals are more likely to be jailed for property crimes, such as theft. In addition, certain crimes seem to criminalize the very state of being homeless. These offenses, called 'nuisance crimes,' violate city ordinances that disallow sleeping on benches or in doorways and public urination" (Mayer and Reichert, July 2018, p.7). Sometimes these crimes are referred to as quality-of-life crimes.

Quality of life crimes are described as

Crimes against the public include offenses that affect the quality of life, group violence such as gang activity, and vice crimes. Because quality-of-life crimes are often based on moral or value judgments, these offenses tend to target the poor and downtrodden. If the conduct prohibited involves an individual's status in society, assembling, or speech, the First and Fourteenth Amendments require a narrowly tailored statute supported by a compelling government interest. This creates a conflict between legislators trying to ensure peace and tranquility for citizens and judges upholding the many individual protections included in the Bill of Rights (University of Minnesota, 2012).

It is really difficult to understand how such a wealthy nation such as the U.S. can utterly ignore the reality of homelessness and what is needed to combat the problem. Bonhoeffer expressly states that spiritual trust is decided by the faithfulness with which people serve Jesus Christ. Believers should be willing to help wherever and however they can. Believers are to bear each other's burdens; that is, to be involved in other people's pain and suffering and to try to be of comfort, all the while, offering the gospel of Jesus, through the Word. "Authority in pastoral care can be found only in the servants of Jesus who seek no authority of their own, but who are

Christians one to another, obedient to the authority of the Word,” (Bonhoeffer, 1954, p. 3).

Christians are to be servants of God and in doing so, serve others in love. A quick google search of homeless services offered by churches in Redding revealed one shelter, six food banks, and no other obvious services. Utility payments, clothing, and food is offered by the Salvation Army. A search of Chico assistance reveals two main shelters, some smaller shelters for women or for addicts, and teens. There is a listing of three churches as places to get food or clothing.

There has to be a reckoning in the Church, a diversion if you will, from the political landscape that has left so many disillusioned and disheartened. Perhaps if Christians could love one another (*KJV*, 1798/2003, John 15:12), and love their enemies as themselves (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Luke 6:35), the church could demonstrate the love people desperately seek from God. This may remind the church to be in the world, but not of it (*KJV*, 1798/2003, John 15:19).

Loving the homeless may be the start to a healing within the Church itself. Yount states, “Engaging median adults in self-disciplined and self-sacrificing service to others is the essential means by which they develop generativity, the only way to prepare against the debilitating effects of despair in old age” (Yount, 2014, p. 80). Serving others gives one purpose.

Taking care of the homeless who *are* the widows, strangers, and orphans the scriptures refer to, deserves to be in the forefront of Christian thinking. James 1:27 states, “Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, James 1:27).

While many theories exist regarding poverty and homelessness, Brady states, “...most theories of poverty can be productively categorized into three broader families of theories: behavioral, structural, and political. Behavioral theories concentrate on individual behaviors as driven by incentives and culture. Structural theories emphasize the demographic and labor

market context, which causes both behavior and poverty. Political theories contend that power and institutions cause policy, which causes poverty and moderates the relationship between behavior and poverty (Brady, 2019, p. 155).

As Christians, Yount states “The only thing that binds us together is our common experience of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The Church is a sociocultural context in which believers worship and learn together praying, singing, ministering, giving, and receiving. With Christ as our Head, people grow together as various parts of the Body, separate, yet one, a social reorganization. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, individuals move from pagan to believer, believer to disciple, disciple to teacher, teacher to leader, and leader to missionary. Individuals, engaged in God's Family, Christ's Body, form an us-ness that extends to every corner of the earth” (Yount, p. 126). This is a parallel to the center pillar in Yount’s Disciplier Model that stands for relationships (Yount, p. 126). “We build ‘community,’ the ‘Body of Christ,’ the ‘Church Family.’” (Yount, p. 19). The Christian obligation has to be extended into the neighboring community, and that includes the marginalized, oppressed, homeless, and poor of one’s locale. Christian leadership can offer visionary solutions to homelessness.

To inspire vision a leader must offer imagination and exciting possibilities that are attainable, (Kouzes, p. 12). Jesus certainly gave a vision of excitement. A “mansion” in the sky is one such vision Jesus offered when discussing the coming Kingdom of God (*KJV*, 1798/2003, John 14:2-6). “Jesus gives signs; he promises alternatives; he suggests newness” (Brueggemann, 2001, p. 93). Some excitement needs to be rediscovered in the pursuit of caring for the homeless with perhaps a reckoning on the creation of mini mansions right here.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to ascertain attitudes and feelings about what could be done to help the homeless by interviewing local government officials, pastors of differing theological foundations, and advocates who work with the homeless. The setting of interviews were coffee shops, governmental official offices, pastors churches, and advocates at local homeless shelters in Redding and Chico. One goal of this study was to develop a healthy and scriptural Christian leadership foundation for caring for the poor and homeless. The other goal was to determine whether attitudes are reflective in policy making regarding homeless issues.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What is the City of Redding doing to address the homeless issue?

RQ2. What is the City of Chico doing to address the homeless issue?

RQ3. What are Christian leaders doing to address the issue of homelessness in Redding?

RQ4. What are Christian leaders doing to address the issue of homelessness in Chico?

RQ5. What are homeless advocates doing regarding homelessness in Redding?

RQ6. What are homeless advocates doing regarding homelessness in Chico?

RQ7. Do attitudes regarding the homeless affect policy making?

Research Design and Methodology

Determining attitudes and feelings about the homeless problem in Shasta County required doing qualitative research. Qualitative phenomenological research is valuable in finding out about problems and developing ideas for further research in order to delve deeper in solving problems. Creswell explains qualitative methods available to the researcher include focus

groups, observations, and interviews. A small sample size is used, and qualitative information seeks more to describe a problem rather than to measure the problem (Creswell, 2018, p. 188).

This study was conducted using a phenomenological design to collect and analyze the research data. Understanding attitudes surrounding the church and its obligations to the poor is paramount to this study. Jeffress states,

The service of hospitality is as important as the service of the Word, and without the service of hospitality, the service of the Word is incomplete. This vision of being church in Acts 2:42–47—this snapshot, this model of being church—was and is fleeting. We are quick to turn away from God’s vision, especially in a world where God’s vision is at odds with the world itself... whatever happened to the movement after its beginnings in the immediate aftermath of the day of Pentecost, whether or not the early followers of Jesus were able to maintain a community life of having all things in common or breaking bread together at home with glad and generous hearts, and whatever happened to the Christian faith after the onset of imperial Christianity all the way up to today with our declining institutions, this model of church in Acts is the eschatological vision for us as followers of Jesus. This vision asks of us as followers of Jesus, almost against all rational thinking, to devote ourselves to the teaching, the fellowship, the breaking of the bread, and the prayers, to the preparation of welcome for those who will be coming, and to be church whether we have a building or just with our bodies in the midst of a dominant culture that tells us that serving is weak and that hospitality can be purchased from the hospitality industry. We, as followers of Jesus, are called to create an alternative vision in the middle of it all. We, as followers of Jesus, are called to create hospitality in this time of unwelcome, and we have always been called to do this work. When we do this work, we are the church (Jeffress, 2017, p. 471).

Jeffress understands that without love for the poor, there is no reason for church and the church is the people who love people and are willing to be servant leaders to them. This study is important because so many people hide in their opulent buildings, surrounding themselves with luxuries and inspire others to desire the same. The danger in this thinking is that people don’t realize that this is pride, instead of humility, envy instead of love, and greed instead of selflessness. Some churches adhere to doctrine that is antithetical to scriptural truth.

The researcher purposively selected participants who help the homeless, such as homeless advocates. Pastors who advertise services for the homeless were chosen at random to interview. City officials were interviewed in semi-structured questions regarding plans for possible future enhancement of homeless services. Creswell states, "...researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study" and "...researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants" (Creswell, 2018, p. 181), therefore, the researcher was in the field, as an observer and researcher. This researcher believed this is a topic that demanded a phenomenological approach. To determine attitudes, the researcher interviewed those participants who are closest to the homeless population, theoretically; government officials, pastors, and advocates. The same types of officials, pastors, and advocates were interviewed in the nearby town of Chico.

Using the holistic approach presented by Creswell is a means to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. "This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges. The larger picture is not necessarily a linear model of cause and effect but rather a model of multiple factors intersecting in different ways...mirrors real life and the ways that events operate in the real world" (Creswell, 2018, p. 182). Homelessness is a complex issue and there are a myriad of problems that need solutions.

Setting

A natural setting for gathering data is essential in phenomenological research. Creswell states, "This up-close information gathered by actually talking to people and seeing them behave and act within their context is a major characteristic of qualitative research" (Creswell, 2015, p.

181), The setting for this research are two comparable northern California cities. This researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with officials of both cities in person at their respective offices or other places requested, such as local coffee shops. The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with church officials of differing denominations in person at their church.

The first question researchers should ask themselves is who would be information rich for this study? Selecting settings for information richness is important and choosing the right interviewees to expand on the subject matter is necessary.

Homeless advocates interviews were semi-structured in nature and interviews were conducted at coffee shops near homeless shelters, as many advocates did not operate out of shelters, per se, but on the streets of the two cities. This researcher is fully aware of the environment surrounding shelters and homeless encampments and has an understanding of the advocates working environment. “The research is situated within the context or setting of participants or sites. In order to report the setting in which the problem is being studied, the researcher must seek an understanding of contextual features and their influence on participants’ experiences (e.g., social, political, and historical). This is essential because the particular contexts allow researchers to “understand how events, actions, and meaning are shaped by the unique circumstances in which these occur (Maxwell, 2013, p.130)” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 44).

Participants

In order to begin this study, the population was chosen and then steps were taken in obtaining a sample of that population for observation and interviews. Obtaining a sample is the “process of selecting a number of individuals for a study in such a way that the individuals represent the larger group from which they were selected” (Roberts, 2004, p. 135).

This researcher used a non-probability sampling technique known as purposive sampling. Bledfeldt explains that non-probability sampling is “intentional in nature” and is not representative of a larger population (Bledfeldt, 2020). Since the aim of this study was to uncover meaning and not to make generalized population inferences, it was an appropriate sampling method for this phenomenological study.

For the purpose of this study, purposive sampling was conducted as the researcher interviewed two pastors in both cities in reference to denominational teachings and beliefs about homelessness. The two homeless advocates in each city did not require criterion sampling as an advocacy position for the homeless population is all that is required for participation. City officials were chosen as participants and their only criteria is to work for the local government on policy issues. This researcher attempted to interview two city officials in each of the cities but is short of one official from Redding. This will bring the total interviews to eleven.

Role of the Researcher

According to Miles, et. al., “The researcher’s role is to gain a holistic (systemic, encompassing, and integrated) overview of the context under study: its social arrangement, its ways of working, and its explicit and implicit rules” (Miles, et. al., 2018, p. 2053-2054). This researcher as a Christian minister who works with the homeless, has a vested interest in how the homeless are viewed. Creswell states, “The researcher is the primary instrument in data collection rather than some inanimate mechanism (Eisner, 1991; Fraenkel & Wallen, 1990; Locke et al., 1987; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; Merriam, 1988)” (Creswell, 2015, p. 204).

To ensure reflective thinking by the researcher, the researcher wrote notes regarding personal experiences, “observations about the process of data collection, and concerns about reactions of participants to the research process” (Creswell, 2015, p. 184). “Sufficient reflexivity

occurs when researchers record notes during the process of research, reflect on their own personal experiences, and consider how their personal experiences may shape their interpretation of results,” (Creswell, 2015, p. 184).

This researcher was homeless with small children about thirty years ago, and had no alcohol or drug problems, but was illegally evicted from her home in Oregon. This researcher remembers the pain and sense of loss in not having a home and will attempt to remove this bias from the work conducted. This researcher is also non-denominational and ascribes to a biblical theological view from the *King James Bible* regarding poverty and the poor. Therefore the researcher understands the principle of “bracketing” as necessary to prevent bias. Bracketing involves the researcher setting aside their own experiences, “as much as possible, to take a fresh perspective toward the phenomenon under examination” (Creswell and Poth, 2018, p. 60). Creswell states, “The researcher also sets aside all prejudgments, bracketing his or her experiences...and relying on intuition, imagination, and universal structures to obtain a picture of the experience” (Creswell, 1998, p. 52). The researcher kept a log, noting her own feelings and views as a bracketing procedure. “Kleinman and Copp encourage a practice of recording emotions and reactions that are incorporated in the field notes. Self-awareness helps the researcher bracket personal biases and beliefs systems that otherwise shape the research process” (Sensing, 2011, p. 46). Bracketing helps in clarity of the information without bias.

Ethical Considerations

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) is responsible for approval of research projects that involve the participation of human subjects. The Board offers either exempt, expedited, or full review protocol when it comes to people involved in a study. Some

exemptions involve public office holders, public benefits, and service programs. The IRB can allow exemption or request modifications. Normally, approval for a study can last for a year.

When gathering public information, it is important to redact all identifiers of a person. For the sake of confidentiality for all parties, this researcher will use pseudonyms and will ensure privacy by locking all permissive documents, media files and interviewing notes in a safe at the researchers home and will have each individual interviewed to sign a consent form wherein the researcher validates privacy measures, and it is understood by the interviewee. Any computer files containing observation notes, interview transcriptions, meeting minutes, media articles to be studied, or any other video or audio files will be downloaded to an encrypted flash drive and stored similarly.

Gunn asserts, “Beauchamp, Jennings, Kinney, and Levine (2002) found many homeless have specific personality issues and insufficient coping mechanisms that put them at risk. There are addiction problems, abuse histories, mental illness, a lack of power, and a hopelessness at times that makes the homeless vulnerable (Gunn, 2013, p. 8). The author continues

Abbarno presented to the newspaper an article that detailed an opportunity for the city to assist the homeless. The suggestion was for the city to build a town for the homeless on some donated land. The homeless could make their own rules, run their own town, and live there peacefully. Lots of land would be given away by lottery. His article was returned unpublished. The editor rejected the piece. Abbarno believed this did not come to fruition, because the homeless did not donate money to the political funds and did not vote. The powerful had little interest in the project, as it did not benefit them. Tindner (2002), in a comment about the perspective, wrote that the editor denied to perspective publication, because the wealthy ignored the situation (Gunn, 2013, p. 10).

Gunn’s assertions remind the researcher that the homeless are vulnerable to exploitation, degradation, violence, and many other events that most people never experience. The preceding paragraph about an unpublished news article is a reminder that the homeless feel left behind in

the quest for a decent life. Being sensitive to emotions of loss and defeat can help the researcher be more compassionate towards the subject under research investigation.

The Belmont Report, signed in 1978, determines ethical rules when it comes to using human subjects in behavioral research. “Three basic principles, among those generally accepted in our cultural tradition, are particularly relevant to the ethics of research involving human subjects: the principles of respect for persons, beneficence and justice” (Belmont, 1978, p. 4). Respect for persons entails “two basic ethical convictions: first, that individuals should be treated as autonomous agents, and second, that persons with diminished autonomy are entitled to protection” (Belmont, 1978, p. 4). The Report states, “respect for persons demands that subjects enter into the research voluntarily and with adequate information” (Belmont, 1978, p. 4).

This researcher has made every effort to protect anyone interviewed from any undue harm or distress. This is a sensitive subject, and the researcher respects all points of view in the study. All participants were required to sign and acknowledge confidentiality of records and personal information. Consent forms were placed in a safe in the researcher’s home after signing. No one under 18 was interviewed and all participants could withdraw from the study if they wished.

Data Collection Methods and Instruments

The goal of phenomenological research was to find the essence of what was felt as a result of the phenomenon as lived by the person experiencing it. The individual relates to the researcher their own interpretation of the experience. For the purposes of this study, the researcher will determine how city officials feel about the homeless population, how pastors see the role of their church in the respective cities in helping the homeless and finally, how do

advocates feel about their efforts to help, with an exploration of any and all feelings any participants may express about this ever-growing issue.

Collection methods

Observations, using field notes and interviews were the primary sources of data for this study. Groenewald states, “A researcher applying phenomenology is concerned with the lived experiences of the people (Greene, 1997; Holloway, 1997; Kruger, 1988; Kvale, 1996; Maypole & Davies, 2001; Robinson & Reed, 1998) involved, or who were involved, with the issue that is being researched” (Groenewald, 2014, p. 44).

A qualitative observation activity includes the researcher taking notes on the activities and behavior of the participants in the study. An unstructured observation protocol is usually useful in eliciting responses to some questions the researcher already has in mind and the participants are then free to offer their points of view. When conducting observations, this researcher will be a “complete observer”, that is, observing without participating in the phenomenon (Creswell, 2015, p. 188). Some of the advantages Creswell mentions for observation work include having an immediate experience with the participant, recording as things happen, and noticing any unusualness, such as any observations that reveal uncomfortable topics for discussion. In a negative light, researchers may be seen as intrusive, things may occur that the researcher cannot report, there may be problems with gaining rapport, or the researcher may lack the skills necessary for good observation to occur (Creswell, 2015, p. 190). Should any of these events occur, the researcher engaged other representatives of the groups mentioned for interviews.

The researcher will develop an interview protocol for asking and recording answers to questions asked by the researcher. “Researchers record information from interviews by making

handwritten notes, by audiotaping, or by videotaping” (Creswell, 2015, p. 190). Audio recordings will be conducted of all interviews and the researcher will also take notes as the interview progresses. The interviewing protocol should be about two pages in length with spaces between questions to write notes. “The total number of questions should be somewhere between 5 and 10, although no precise number can be given” (Creswell, 2015, p. 190). The researcher should memorize the questions and the protocol should contain the elements of an introduction, the interview content questions with probes, and closing instructions.

Creswell recommends an opening question that puts the interviewee at ease and asks questions that are designed to relax the interviewee, so they freely talk about their experience about working with the homeless. Content questions should be framed in a way that is friendly to the interviewee. “Probes are reminders to the researcher of two types: to ask for more information or to ask for an explanation of ideas...tell me more....could you explain your response more? ...but by including probes in the interview, the researcher can expand the duration of the interview” (Creswell, 2015, p. 191). Closing statements contain thanks to the interviewee for their time and to be available for any final questions. Ask for a follow up if needed for more clarification. Being aware of what information might be required will save time and energy for both the interviewee and the interviewer (Creswell, 2015, p. 191).

Instruments and protocols

This researcher attended local governmental meetings to observe local officials discuss the homeless issue. If meetings were not being held, video footage of the last few meetings were viewed for homeless issue discussion. This researcher collected historical information in the form of media documentation, city council minutes and other pertinent documentation regarding homelessness in Redding as part of reflective assessment and observational notations.

The introduction to the interview includes the researcher's name and purpose of the study. The interviewees read the purpose of the study and signed an informed consent form wherein confidentiality is assured, and pseudonyms are secure. Also in the introduction of the interview information is included an explanation of the structure of the interview, such as the time required, number of questions asked, and to see if there are any questions for the interviewer.

Some practical advice is provided for researchers by Benner (1994). It is recommended that participant language be used when interviewing so that questions are asked in the vocabulary of the person being interviewed. It was also advised that researchers listen actively, which can lead to asking probing and clarification questions. Benner believes that sometimes the researcher may need more than one interview per individual. Benner uses descriptive questions on the basis of getting respondents to describe experience, and structural questions for clarity. Spradley (1979) also believes that descriptive questions should be supplemented with questions that show how individuals see their experiences, i.e., the structure of their experiences.

Procedures

Observation protocol will include a legal pad wherein field notes can be taken. Creswell suggests that observation protocol could be a "single page with a dividing line down the middle to separate descriptive notes...from reflexive notes...the time, place and date of field setting where the observation takes place" (Creswell, 2015, p. 190). And Sensing states "The data from observations consist of detailed descriptions of people's activities, behaviors, actions, and the full range of interpersonal interactions and organizational processes that are part of observable human experience" (Sensing, 2011, p. 80).

Following the interview protocol offered by Creswell, the researcher added in the interview notes, basic interview information such as date and time of the interview, where the interview is taking place, and the names of the interviewee and interviewer. The length of the interview is noted and the file name of the audio file and transcript information (Creswell, 2015, p. 191).

The researcher spent time interviewing city officials in their offices or at local coffee shops. Along with answering RQ1 and RQ2, according to city officials in Redding and Chico, what plans are in place or being created to address the future issue of homelessness in their cities? The researcher asked What is the city doing in response to homelessness now? Are there plans for more transitional housing in the future? How does the city plan to use incoming HUD housing funds? What does the city official want to see in relation to services for the homeless? Does the official believe that the church should do more? Again, there are only three subjects interviewed in this group and the interviews took about 45 minutes to an hour to conduct.

The researcher contacted local pastors in each city to ascertain their views regarding help for the homeless. Along with RQ3 and RQ4, some questions in these semi-structured interviews that were asked are What are proper teachings in assisting the poor and homeless? What is the practice of their church? What can be done to assist the homeless in a more effective way? Does the pastor believe the homeless population in their city is receiving the gospel? If so, how? If not, how to facilitate? These interviews involved two pastors from each city and took anywhere from 45 minutes to an hour to conduct. This researcher compiled a list of churches, bypassing those who are obvious in their assistance to the homeless; meaning they offer food or clothing or shelter on a regular basis. This criterion sampling only included denominations who help the local homeless population.

This researcher compiled interview data to determine attitudes regarding homelessness in these two cities by also interviewing homeless advocates who work to improve services for the homeless. These advocates speak at city council meetings and county board of supervisors meetings to speak for those who can't speak for themselves. The researcher interviewed two advocates per city for a total of four unstructured interviews. The interviews took between 45 minutes to an hour or longer RQ5 and RQ6 were answered. RQ7 were answered as an overall inquiry.

Data storage includes audio recording of all interviews, with interviewee signed permission forms. Each interview has a code, for example, "city official #1, June 22, 2021. Each interview has its own digital file and is labeled with this code. Transcription of phrases, key words, and statements have been conducted. A second data storage method involves the field log, where notes and thoughts of the researcher are recorded as a way to have a second set of data. Some types of field notes are observational notes, what does the researcher think it means notes, reminder notes, and end of the day analytical notes.

Data Analysis

In phenomenological research, observations and interviews are compiled and processed through analysis of the data. This technique is appropriate for this study of attitudes towards the homeless population. The data collected consists of eleven interviews. Again, this study aimed to demonstrate attitudes towards the homeless population by those who serve the population.

Analysis Methods

Analysis can occur as observations and interviews are taking place. "Coding is the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks (or text or image segments) and writing a word representing a category in the margins (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). It involves taking text

data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories, and labeling those categories with a term, often based in the actual language of the participant (called an *in vivo* term)” (Creswell, 2015, p. 194).

After gathering documents and conducting interviews, the researcher must “winnow” the data. This includes “a process of focusing in on some of the data and disregarding other parts of it” (Creswell, 2015, p. 192). “In qualitative research, the impact of this process is to aggregate data into a small number of themes, something between five and seven themes (Creswell, 2013)” (Creswell, 2015, p. 192).

The interviews have been transcribed, and all transcriptions are placed together into a computer document. The researcher has read through the transcripts several times as suggested by Quinn & Clare (2016) and Moser and Korstjens (2017). In conjunction with documentary data analysis and forming codes, the researcher conducted the coding process by starting with the transcriptions of the interviews conducted looking for words, significant phrases or segments of text that are similar to one another. These were grouped as common thoughts and compiled into themes. Creswell asks “What general ideas are the participants saying? What is the tone of the ideas?” (Creswell, 2014, p. 193) or “What were the lessons learned? (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)” (Creswell, 2014, p. 198).

Determining the emergent themes from the data involved picking the ones that “appear as major findings in qualitative studies and are often used as headings in the findings sections of studies” (Creswell, 2015, p. 194). Multiple perspectives from participants, supported by diverse quotes from interviews and building layers of analysis to be “shaped into a general description” for this phenomenal study was necessary to adequately uncover the themes regarding attitudes towards the homeless (Creswell, 2015, p. 195).

Trustworthiness

As far as qualitative studies are concerned, Sensing relates that Munro suggests that, as an epistemological concept, validity assumes some absolute, fixed, and verifiable truth. If the methodology is deemed appropriate in relationship to the research questions, data collection procedures, and analysis techniques, then validity questions are subservient to the methodology at hand (Sensing, 2011, p. 214-215). Since the researcher is dealing with the emotions from felt experiences of similar phenomenon there is no trust test other than the researcher's meticulous data gathering and analysis. There are a few things a researcher can do that can establish the trustworthiness of their research study.

To ensure the trustworthiness and validity of the research, steps will be taken to make sure that all data and analysis is correct. To ensure rigorous quality throughout the research study, intentional criteria will be established. To assure trustworthiness, the researcher has triangulated the data by using methods that include a codebook, field log and observation notes, and has been kept locked in the researchers computer files or on an encrypted flash drive. In order to further aid in the trustworthiness of the study, the researcher can employ a number of methods, including member checks or peer debriefing. Creswell states, "Triangulate different data sources by examining evidence from the sources and using it to build a coherent justification for themes. If themes are established based on converging several sources of data or perspectives from participants, then this process can be claimed as adding to the validity of the study" (Creswell, 2015, p. 200). Each of these three methods; a codebook, field log and observation notes examines trustworthiness from a different perspective, allowing for triangulation.

Creswell defines validity as being based on “determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant or the readers of an account (Creswell & Miller, 2000)” (Creswell, 2015, p. 199). Another way of adding validity to a study, according to Creswell, is to “use a rich, thick description to convey the findings. This description may transport readers to the setting and give the discussion an element of shared experiences. When qualitative researchers provide detailed descriptions of the setting, for example, or offer many perspectives about a theme, the results become more realistic and richer. This procedure can add to the validity of findings” (Creswell, 2015, p. 200).

Credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe that credibility is an extremely important way of establishing the trustworthiness of a research project. Credibility is the alignment of the data source with the results and is established by views of the participants being the same as the way they are portrayed in the researcher’s notes and transcribed interviews. Lincoln & Guba (1985) believe that in terms of credibility, the information should reflect what is “in the eyes of the information sources” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 213). Member checks involve the participants’ verification of their experiences as experienced. “The informant will serve as a check throughout the analysis process. An ongoing dialogue regarding my interpretations of the informant’s reality will ensure truth of the data” (Creswell, 2015, p. 208). Lincoln and Guba (1985) believe that member checks are “the most critical technique for establishing credibility” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 314).

Dependability. Dependability and confirmability ensure the results of a project and helps to provide an “external check” on trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 323). Dependability in a project means an establishment of the findings and that the study is consistent and repeatable. Sensing states that, “Once a rich description is provided, it is up to the reader,

secondary researchers, or other practitioners to decide if the models described could be transferable to other contexts” (Sensing, 2011, p. 215).

Confirmability. Confirmability is the degree to which outcomes of the study can be confirmed by other people. Sensing states, “Fundamentally, the possibility of applying findings across settings is established through thickly detailed descriptions that enable audiences to identify similarities of the research setting with other contexts. If you put it another way, this will assist other readers to “see themselves and/or their situation” in the study and Swinton and Mowatt (2016, p. 47) call this recognition of shared experiences “identification” and “resonance” (Sensing, 2011, p. 215). Now that interviews have been transcribed, this researcher believes that organizations or groups that assist the homeless may find the information useful for their activities and city officials may find the information of some value when it comes to determining policies related to the homeless.

Transferability. Transferability is the ability of the study to be applicable for other similar environments (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 114). If the study has transferability, it is considered to have “fittingness” according to Lincoln and Guba (Lincoln & Guba, 2015, p. 124). Transferability matters in ensuring the setting, processes and other key factors are accurately presented and could be repeated in a comparable setting. One of the best methods for obtaining transferability is through the use of a codebook, which establishes the accuracy of the study from the perspective of the researcher. This codebook will allow the researcher to organize the codes and the themes will reveal themselves as analysis takes place (Creswell & Poth, 2018,). The researcher will be explicit in keeping encompassing field and observational notes that will record step by step how the research is conducted. This researcher hopes to inspire people to use this

phenomenological research study to discover their own community's efforts to house the unhoused.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to determine attitudes towards the homeless by policy makers, advocates, and clergy. As homelessness is on the rise in the nation and in Redding, California, this study determined how people feel about the homeless. This qualitative research method using a phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study. Phenomenological analysis was conducted to focus on the essence of the phenomenon of homelessness. By focusing on the similarly populated neighboring city of Chico, California, a comparison was drawn regarding programs and projects that assist the homeless. In order to ascertain attitudes about homelessness, the researcher conducted eleven interviews with two governmental representatives from Chico and one from Redding, two homeless advocates from each city and two pastors from each city. Using a phenomenological approach, the researcher was successful and gathered data that displayed deep feelings or beliefs about the homeless. "And whosoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea" (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Mark 9:42).

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of chapter four is to present the results of this study. This phenomenological project is about attitudes, beliefs, and feelings about the unhoused populations of Redding and Chico, California, by those who work with mitigating these life circumstances. This research was conducted by interviewing local government officials, pastors of differing theological foundations, and advocates who work with the homeless about their experiences and their beliefs about the work they do. An introduction of each participant along with thematic data is presented in the form of narratives guided by the project's research questions and participants responses to those questions.

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What is the City of Redding doing to address the homeless issue?

RQ2. What is the City of Chico doing to address the homeless issue?

RQ3. What are Christian leaders doing to address the issue of homelessness in Redding?

RQ4. What are Christian leaders doing to address the issue of homelessness in Chico?

RQ5. What are homeless advocates doing regarding homelessness in Redding?

RQ6. What are homeless advocates doing regarding homelessness in Chico?

RQ7. Do attitudes regarding the homeless affect policy making?

Updated Information

The issue of homelessness became a timely topic for this researcher and some things have changed since this research journey began two years ago. The researcher feels this updated

information is pertinent and is placed here to illuminate current attempts at helping the homeless in Redding and Chico. By understanding the steps taken to fix some of the issues alluded to by participants' interviews, the researcher hopes to bring the reader up to date with efforts to change the landscape from helpless to hopeful for the homeless of Redding and Chico.

Here in California, Governor Newsom of California began the process of working to solve this issue with over 10 billion dollars allocated to the state's counties and cities for a period of three years, beginning in 2020. This has caused a wellspring of nonprofits from those wishing to offer assistance such as drug rehabilitation housing in a local hotel in Redding (Pierce, November 19, 2022) to 177 pallet homes being erected at an unused BMX site at a fairground in Chico to be run by a local mission (Weber, April 25, 2022). Those from encampments who won't or can't fit into the existing shelter system, were offered a place to camp in Chico. The campground established to accommodate nine people was cleared out recently, due to over 45 homeless individuals using the lot for camping (Weber, March 21, 2023).

There are three different locations for 17 pallet shelters purchased by the city of Redding, eight units to be run by the United Way in partnership with Pathways to Housing, four units at the local Lutheran church which have been built for a year, but are still unfilled, and several to be built at nearby GNRM (Benda, December 17, 2022). Also in Redding, controversy arose at a city council meeting wherein an elder and sitting member of Bethel's leadership team, Julie Winter, had to recuse herself from a decision regarding an appeal filed against the planning commission's decision to allow the church to expand the second campus without dormitories (Benda, March 22, 2023).

The project is to expand BSSM to accommodate several thousand more students. Two of the five council members are congregational members at Bethel, and voted to deny the appeal

after it was stated that membership at the church, alone, wasn't grounds for recusal. One of those in opposition referred to the fact that Bethel was not planning to build dorms for their students. It is well known that Bethel students live off campus (Redding Revival Community).

This strains neighborhoods with additional needs for parking, noise complaints and until covid hit, attempts at healing neighbors using hands on techniques. It is common knowledge that Bethel students may live compacted into single family homes, with two students per room, and sometimes additional place is added by using common areas as bedrooms, such as closet space. These practices place severe limits on affordable housing units for families in Redding. This has also helped to increase the local homeless population, as low-income housing is scarce, although admittedly, there are many HUD units being built and many more in the planning stages (Benda, December 28, 2022).

However, there are still questions regarding the evaporation of funds, mismanagement of funds and a lack of oversight on how counties and cities should spend their homeless funds, and for a short time, Governor Newsom expressed interest in adherence to some type of standards, but that didn't culminate into policies that chose the best answer or any sense of uniformity in the way homelessness was tackled across the state. In the February 6, 2023, issue of CalMatters, for example, an article entitled "California homelessness: Where are the state's billions going? Here's the new, best answer" reveals a problem with the mismanagement of funds. The article states, "For the first time, a new state report offers a birds-eye view of how much the state has spent to halt homelessness — nearly \$10 billion over three years. Of the half-million Californians who made use of those services, more than 40% ended up housed. Which also means the majority did not, or the state lost track of their whereabouts" (CalMatters, February 6, 2023, para 1).

The article goes on to explain,

“The state’s Interagency Council on Homelessness, a state body tasked with overseeing the state’s homelessness strategy and divvying up funding to local governments, issued a report detailing just how much the state has spent on the crisis between 2018 and 2021 — and what it’s gotten in return. The answer to those questions, according to the report: The state has spent nearly \$10 billion and provided services to more than 571,000 people, each year helping more people than the last. And despite all that, at the end of year three, the majority of those more than half a million Californians still didn’t end up with a roof over their heads. The number of unsheltered Californians continues to swell” (CalMatters, February 6, 2023).

A bipartisan legislative committee will conduct an audit on the billions spent to solve the homeless crisis. Spearheaded by state senator Dave Cortese, a democrat from San Jose, he states,

“Our residents deserve to know how (homelessness) dollars are getting there and how they are being invested. What’s working and what’s not, and I think we need to know that as well. Adding transparency will help both the state and local jurisdictions work together to figure out how to best spend these dollars going forward. We’ve all seen homeless encampments, but what I saw was far worse than a tent city, it was a public health disaster. Rodents were running around your feet, massive piles of trash, tons of broken RVs and abandoned cars, cars turned upside down with people living inside. These homeless encampments are not safe, they’re not humane, we all know that. They’re actually brutal. The people living in these awful conditions deserve better, and we can do better, really, as a matter of decency” (Joseph, March 22, 2023).

After wrangling with the idea of accountability from counties and cities for how the money is currently being spent, Governor Newsom has said, “Californians demand accountability and results, not settling for the status quo,” and Oakland Assembly member Buffy Wicks, who chairs the legislative housing committee quipped, “We’ve sent people to the moon. We can solve homelessness in California” (CalMatters, February 6, 2023).

This information is crucial in analyzing questions about how money is being spent in the state of California for reducing the number of homeless people on the streets of the cities, other homelessness endeavors, and whether or not programs offered are effective in permanently housing homeless individuals. This information is needed for understanding that there are efforts

being made to solve homelessness in California, however, whether these measures are working is in question and will require future research.

Compilation Protocol and Measures

The researcher purposively selected participants who help the homeless, such as homeless advocates. Pastors who advertise services for the homeless were chosen at random to interview. City officials were interviewed in semi-structured questions regarding plans for possible future enhancement of homeless services. Creswell states, "...researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study" and "...researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants" (Creswell, 2018, p. 181), therefore, the researcher was in the field, as an observer and researcher.

This researcher believed this is a topic that demanded a phenomenological approach. To determine attitudes, the researcher interviewed those participants who are closest to the homeless population, theoretically; government officials, pastors, and advocates. The same types of officials, pastors, and advocates were interviewed in the nearby town of Chico.

The researcher developed an interview protocol for asking and recording answers to questions asked by the researcher. "Researchers record information from interviews by making handwritten notes, by audiotaping, or by videotaping" (Creswell, 2015, p. 190). Audio recordings were conducted of all eleven interviews and the researcher took notes as the interviews progressed. The interviewing protocol was about two pages in length with spaces between questions to write notes. "The total number of questions should be somewhere between 5 and 10, although no precise number can be given" (Creswell, 2015, p. 190). The researcher

memorized the questions, and the protocol contained the elements of an introduction, the interview content questions with probes, and closing instructions.

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role of their church in the respective cities in helping the homeless and finally, how do advocates feel about their efforts to help, with an exploration of any and all feelings any participants may express about this ever-growing issue.

Demographic and Sample Data

Using the holistic approach presented by Creswell is a means to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. “This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges. The larger picture is not necessarily a linear model of cause and effect but rather a model of multiple factors intersecting in different ways...mirrors real life and the ways that events operate in the real world” (Creswell, 2018, p. 182). Homelessness is a complex issue and there are a myriad of problems that need a myriad of solutions.

To ensure reflective thinking by the researcher, the researcher wrote notes regarding personal experiences, “observations about the process of data collection, and concerns about reactions of participants to the research process” (Creswell, 2015, p. 184). “Sufficient reflexivity occurs when researchers record notes during the process of research, reflect on their own personal experiences, and consider how their personal experiences may shape their interpretation of results,” (Creswell, 2015, p. 184).

Participants

The participants are described below using pseudonyms in order to ensure each participants anonymity. It should be noted that although each participant has been given a pseudonym, they all agreed to “go on the record,” with their real names, if necessary. This researcher will not categorize participants by location, although any differences in the cities’ activities or approaches will be discussed in the analysis.

The Officials

The researcher decided to interview two government officials from each of the counties in the study. Three subjects were interviewed.

Leroy

Leroy ran and won a seat on the city council on a *housing first* platform. Leroy believes, as all the interviewees do, that a lack of affordable housing is definitely what is causing the increase in homelessness nationwide. For his efforts, he'd like to see more downtown low-income housing, as that's where most services are, and he believes a nationwide, systematic change to HUD's processes is needed. "Section 8 vouchers are the worst form of housing subsidy because the more vouchers you put out just keeps increasing rents. We have to entirely fund the program again because we have absolutely no equity out of that, and our public housing has deteriorated in the meantime".

Laura

Laura is the director of a mental health peer support program that talks about getting "people's voices into the system in order to create change in the mental health system". As someone who has suffered depression and anxiety that placed her in mental health care at a former time and who has been homeless, Laura knows firsthand that the system needs to be asking patients/clients "what do you need?"

Her belief stems from the idea that we, as a society, don't understand the gamut of human experience when it comes to mental illness. Why, for example, she asked, do we concern ourselves with people that talk to themselves? People who are sick, but harmless. And she believes being homeless certainly exacerbates any mental illness. Laura has a fresh and different perspective to offer.

Sam

Sam is a mental health social worker at the county mental health department. Sam worked with the homeless in encampments and will admit that he had a dim view of the unhoused before this work. With his work on a police/mental health professionals mobile team, he has discovered that mentally ill homeless individuals tend to isolate, but “if we bring them donuts, chips or something to build their trust, we might get valuable information about someone out there who’s more of a loner, but really struggling and this widens treatment, so just to see people come together to help out an individual who has lost their way, makes this pretty powerful”.

The Pastors

The researcher expected to have a lot of pastors and/or ministers respond to requests for interviews, however, they did not. The pastors who did respond expressed desire to assist the homeless, but also stressed the need for additional assistance.

Beau

Beau is a former pastor who has a peer counseling service tailored towards local nonprofits staff and administrators. However, Beau is also on the local COC panel, and organized an event that offered services to the homeless, such as eyeglasses by the local Lions Club, mental health, and medical services. Beau’s position on the COC has placed him into a position of realizing that although there is funding through HUD and the local city housing office for offering vouchers for housing, the availability of units is just not there. Beau uses accountability language and believes individuals who care for the homeless need to build relationships with them.

Nick

A liberal leaning denominational pastor, Nick's church is only "one of eight" churches in town, including the local synagogue and the Quakers, that help the homeless because they understand "the core of Jesus' ministry" Nick says. Emergency shelter is provided for a two-week period at Nick's church during the winter, and rotation is done with a couple of other churches, but sometimes, "we end up doing it for a month", he states. This summer finds the church opening also, as a cooling center.

Nick said, "I want to make it clear that I am not in this necessarily, because I have a big heart for the homeless. I am doing this because Jesus commands me to and sometimes we have to do things we personally would disagree with. When we're serving God, we have to hold our noses, swallow our pride, jump in with both feet and take a leap of faith".

Joe

Joe has been an advocate for the homeless for over twenty years and has a blog where he offers information about local homelessness issues. He has faced many obstacles during this time, including not being allowed to attend city council meetings due to his comments about the lack of assistance offered to the unhoused population. At one time, Joe was the director of a local food bank, which he states, "really gave me a heart for the homeless". He is a Christian street pastor and claims that many churches in town could speak up for the homeless, but do not, and are only concerned with their immediate congregations. He spoke of the need to follow Matthew 24:3-46. He is concerned about the deaths of homeless people and the fact that criminalization of the homeless occurs frequently in his hometown, resulting in an indifference that borders on fear of the homeless among the local population.

Bobby

Bobby is a former director of a local shelter. A professor and pastor, Bobby has served homeless people breakfast in the downtown area of his city for about a year and a half, three times a week. “In the United States, historically homelessness has been seen as personal failure to live out the life blessed by God who has placed each citizen amongst such bountiful resources. Consequently, the manifest destiny of each American from the Mayflower Puritans to West Coast liberals is to live a materially and spiritually fulfilled life. Those who do not attain this are seen as abject failures”.

The Advocates

The advocates interviewed by this researcher were passionate, dedicated and of all stripes of ideological viewpoints regarding assistance to the homeless population. Their desire to assist the homeless was inspirational and driven.

Mike

Mike travels with a mobile shower team to local homeless encampments to offer assistance to the unhoused population. He is also a member of a local housing consortium designed to keep rents low in his town. Considered a “local hero” in the town periodical, Mike has received many “peace and justice” awards for his work on environmental projects as well as his homeless advocacy work.

An advocate for over twenty years, Mike is concerned about the city’s lack of a viable response to homelessness and the city’s desire to clear out encampments without other, more viable options for the city’s homeless population. “They’d rather have new awnings downtown”, than to help the homeless. “I’ve been advised by city councilors not to bring up anything before the city because they personally don’t like me”. And, like Joe, Mike is also concerned about

homeless deaths, and sees elderly women as the largest growing segment of the homeless population, because of the unaffordability of apartment living. “In the 70s, 80s, 90s and early 2000s, you could rent an apartment on Social Security. Not anymore” he says.

Adam

Adam is the director of a local faith-based mission that helps the homeless. Around 2000 homeless individuals go through the mission yearly. Along with a thirty-day limit on stays, many programs that address drug addiction, employment and education are offered that can extend the stay of clients, depending on their needs. They also offer services to low-income people, such as free meals, clothing, and food bank items, and are considered to be the hub of helping in this city.

Many churches donate funding to the mission in lieu of offering their own services. Adam desires to build relationships with people and building trust with them. He believes in meeting people where they are. Adam has been able to work with all stakeholders in the county to make movements in solving homelessness. He states, “We’ve either stayed slightly steady or actually decrease year after year, because we have fantastic private public partnerships between all of us. We don’t all agree philosophically all the time, but that’s ok. That’s why we’re individual organizations, but by partnering with others, and where we do have those agreements in, we’re able to really help”.

Jackson

Jackson is an environmentalist and also an advocate for homeless individuals in his city. He spends his time gathering food and clothing to hand out to homeless individuals in a nearby park every weekend. A weekly activity of Jackson’s for about seven years, Jackson has also written letters and articles for local media and uses this avenue to raise awareness. Jackson’s

view is that there is a moral responsibility to offer assistance to the poor, based on the idea of human rights and the idea of “listening to the voice of suffering”. He states, “If you do charity and don’t step on any toes, it’s all good. But if you step on toes, it can get ugly”. A renown local advocate, Jackson has spoken at city council meetings and has been arrested for protesting activities.

Julian

Julian is the director of a drug rehabilitation program that seeks out homeless addicts and offers assistance in the form of transitional housing and treatment. He has spent the better part of three years in the local homeless encampments seeking out those who need drug rehab services. Julian believes that “in order for people to move from homelessness, they need a friend, purpose, and hope. They need a new and healthy community of people who want to make a difference”. Julian relates that there are many people who want to help, but they just don’t know how to. Julian stated that there are 25,000 Christians in this city. “Why can’t we get 2000 to engage with the homeless”?

After conducting the audio recorded interviews, transcribing them, and coding them, several themes emerged. In phenomenological studies, analysis can occur as observations and interviews are taking place.

Theme Development

The researcher spent about a year interviewing eleven individuals about their feelings regarding the homeless populations in their hometowns. The interviews were semi structured, on average an hour long, and were recorded with a written consent form from each participant. Several interviews went longer, as this was a very passionate cause for several people. The researcher welcomed the openness of this. The researcher downloaded the audio of each

interview and had them transcribed. The researcher collected all the interviews, printed them out, and used hand coding practices recommended by Creswell, 2015.

When coding for thematic information, words like drug addict, mentally ill, criminal, elderly, and poor were all words used by the interviewees to describe the homeless population. The demise of the nuclear family, family dysfunction, domestic violence, and low ACES scores were also used to explain why someone would be unhoused. Words like accountability and personal responsibility were used frequently to describe what actions homeless people should take to assist in their own attempts to become housed. Human rights, friendship, community, and hope were all used by the interviewees, as well as moral and right to describe why helping the homeless is necessary.

It should be noted that not everyone this researcher interviewed was a Christian, but they were all sincere believers in what they are doing to help the homeless. A sense of morality and justice were prevalent reasons why they do the work they do.

Themes

The researcher began the process of coding to find the thematic information from the interviews. "Coding is the process of organizing the data by bracketing chunks (or text or image segments) and writing a word representing a category in the margins (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). It involves taking text data or pictures gathered during data collection, segmenting sentences (or paragraphs) or images into categories, and labeling those categories with a term, often based in the actual language of the participant (called an *in vivo* term)" (Creswell, 2015, p. 194).

By bracketing chunks of text, Rossman and Rallis, 2012, recommend writing frequent and common words in the margins of transcripts. Segmenting sentences or paragraphs and then labeling those categories, using *in vivo* terminology is Creswell's direction (Creswell, 2015). By

winnowing the data, the researcher was able to decipher the thematic information. This winnowing includes “a process of focusing in on some of the data and disregarding other parts of it” (Creswell, 2015, p. 192).

The following themes were revealed upon the transcription and coding of the eleven interviews. Participants are quoted in narrative form regarding each of the themes discovered.

Theme 1: There is a Shelter Crisis in Each City.

The following **RQ**’s are answered in this theme.

RQ1. What is the City of Redding doing to address the homeless issue?

RQ2. What is the City of Chico doing to address the homeless issue?

Both Chico and Redding have an immediate shelter crisis. That means there are more people homeless than there are shelter beds to accommodate them. Some of the reasons are the fact that there aren’t enough different types of programs needed to address the issues of mental health, drug addiction, and chronic homelessness resulting from economic disparities.

Jackson said, “Look. I’m not going to solve the shelter crisis. Because that’s not my mission. My mission is that I stipulate that we absolutely have failed. And that’s a fundamental injustice”.

The shelter crisis is a continuing theme in the information related to this researcher by the participants in this project. This issue is actually nationwide, but California, in particular, has about a third of the country’s population of homeless individuals. USAfacts.org states that there are 585,462 people homeless in the United States and 171,521 people who are homeless in California based on the 2022 PIT count (USAFacts, 2023). In Shasta County, there were 798 persons who are homeless (NorCal COC, 2022), and in Butte County, the number is 1,156

persons (Butte County PIT Count Regional Report, 2023), although this researcher has been advised that the numbers are higher in both counties. USAFacts site states in a footnote,

Based on a point-in-time count taken in January of each year. The total number of people experiencing homelessness over the course of a year will be higher than the point-in-time count. The data for 2021 does not display the total count of individuals experiencing homelessness or the count of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness due to pandemic-related disruptions to counts. Additionally, estimates of the number of individuals experiencing sheltered homelessness at a point in time in 2021 should be viewed with caution, as the number could be artificially depressed compared with non-pandemic times, reflecting reduced capacity in some communities or safety concerns regarding staying in shelters (USAFacts, 2022).

All interviewees agreed there was not enough shelter space to accommodate the existing numbers of homeless individuals on city streets. As Mike relates, “our shelter crisis is the most severe disaster to hit our streets and parks in a lifetime”. He asked, “Why aren’t more people talking about it and why isn’t it on the front page of every newspaper? It should be on every city council agenda”. Joe states, “they don’t want another shelter here, which is what we need”.

Mike states, “Don’t talk to me about affordable housing. Affordable housing is four years away. What we need is a safe, warm, clean place for people before winter as there are people dying on the streets”. Mike believes politicians should be held accountable for the issue. He has been told not to bring it up at city council meetings. However, he states,

“Our group and other groups could set up safe spot communities, save and manage campgrounds for a fraction of the budget of the alternative programs”, which include sweeps of encampments and evictions that force people to move from one area to another in the city”.

Leroy calls the city playing “whack a mole” with the homeless population of his city. “We’re moving the same people over and over again”.

When asked about the reasons for homelessness, Bobby stated,

There is not one main reason for homelessness in the United States. In my experience in my city and through visits to other towns with homeless communities such as

neighboring cities and San Francisco, I think on an individual level the causes stem from drug abuse and or alcoholism, which when combined on a structural level with such things as the cycle of generational poverty and with it the lack of employment, the breakdown of the family and the economic effects of recession, all produce a cycle of generational disenfranchisement. In this cycle conditions such as mental illness, brain disease, the inability to hold a job, and other sundry psychological conditions manifest themselves in ways that prevent significant numbers of people rising above homelessness.

He continued, “the city council refuses to thoroughly address the problem of homelessness in the city. Their focus is a ‘safe’ and restored community for the public. Resources are lacking for those on the street living with alcoholism and mental health problems. Temporary housing and shelter programs seem to get the most attention. Permanent housing is not addressed”.

Summary. Theme number one involves the discovery of a lack of immediate sheltering for people, hence the need for encampments. People need a place to lay their head at night, a place that is warm, dry and offers food and clothing assistance. All parties interviewed agreed that this was an immediate need in their communities. **RQ1** and **RQ2** were answered by interviewees as neither city is interested in expansion of their present shelter systems.

Theme 2: Mental Health and Drug Addiction Services are Lacking.

The following **RQ**’s are answered in this theme.

RQ1. What is the City of Redding doing to address the homeless issue?

RQ2. What is the City of Chico doing to address the homeless issue?

Mental Health. There are transitional housing options available, or seemingly so, for those who are alcoholics or drug addicted seeking rehabilitation including the mentioned hotel in Redding. There is limited mental health housing available, although one of the interviewees is spearheading a project to build the same in Chico.

Laura is very concerned about legislation that seeks to expand the definition of “gravely disabled” that would sweep more people into a 5150 hold and forced hospitalization. Laura refers to this as a re-institutional attempt due to the fact that community-based care has been left out to dry up due to a continued lack of funding since the 1980’s. Drug abusers would be swept up into this legislation as well. “That’s the narrative I’m fighting right now across the state is this idea that people don’t know what’s best for themselves. And we need to take care of them, but even those suffering from delusions know they are unwell and should be at the forefront of their own care”. Hospitalizations do not help, she believes, and explains that there are other alternative care and community-based models to choose from for mental health care.

Gravely disabled usually means that a person cannot care for themselves and are a danger to themselves or others. However, Senate Bill 43 (Curwen, March 1, 2023) would expand the definition of a 5150 mental health hold to enlarge the conditions that constitute “gravely disabled”. The language from the bill reads in part,

Existing law, the Lanterman-Petris-Short Act, provides for the involuntary commitment and treatment of a person who is a danger to themselves or others or who is gravely disabled. Existing law also provides for a conservator of the person or estate to be appointed for a person who is gravely disabled. Existing law, for the purposes of involuntary commitment and conservatorship, defines “gravely disabled,” among other things, as a condition in which a person, as a result of a mental health disorder, is unable to provide for the basic personal needs of food, clothing, or shelter (Trackbill).

In other words, even if one is not a danger to themselves or others, being homeless without a way to have food, clothing or somewhere to sleep would also be considered a reason to

hospitalize someone. This bill would expand the definition of “gravely disabled” for these purposes to read, in part, to mean,

a condition in which a person, as a result of a mental health disorder, is incapable of making informed decisions about, or providing for, their own basic personal needs for food, clothing, shelter, or medical care without significant supervision and assistance from another person and, as a result of being incapable of making these informed decisions, the person is at risk of substantial bodily harm, dangerous worsening of a concomitant serious physical illness, significant psychiatric deterioration, or mismanagement of essential needs that could result in bodily harm (Trackbill).

The bill would also define “gravely disabled” to mean a condition in which a person has an incapacity to provide informed consent to treatment due to anosognosia” (Trackbill). In times past, anosognosia or being homeless without shelter was not considered to be adequate criteria for an involuntary hospitalization. Many mental health professionals are not sure if this law is going to be helpful as a treatment option for people, and some other advocates are not sure if this is constitutional.

Anosognosia is a symptom that cause the mentally ill individual to lack understanding of their condition. Laura believes anosognosia doesn’t really exist. She relates,

there’s this idea that they keep pushing around this false idea of anosognosia. Yes, it was developed as a theory, and it applied to people with dementia and stroke victims. And now they’re transposing that to mental health as if it is a real thing. It’s not a real thing as they saying that people are so unwell that they don’t know they’re unwell. But I can tell you it’s false, because even people in their deepest delusions have some cognizance. And they even contradict themselves because they’ll say this bill is for people that are so sick, they can’t help themselves, but we’re gonna give them a supporter to help them choose. That’s the narrative I’m fighting for right now across the state is this idea that people don’t know what’s best for them. People have this illusion that hospitalization helps. I’ve been on the inside. I can tell you, firsthand, that it doesn’t help. I can tell you what happens. You go in and you’re by yourself for many hours a day. Your only contact is with a nurse coming in to give you medication, or to tell you to shower. You see the doctor maybe one time for fifteen minutes, and then he prescribes you a bunch of medication. And then basically you are on your own. That is not helpful. You end up becoming zombified.

Sam, on the other hand, states regarding anosognosia, “It’s not quite a delusion, but it’s where they don’t recognize, despite what people told them, or despite what treatment providers treat them with, they still cannot acknowledge it. But I don’t think that condition or symptom is permanent, but I feel like sometimes we’ve seen it disappear with more insight that the individual gains”. Sam is concerned with people dying on the streets due to something as simple as dehydration because of a lack of available water. He also believes an increase to the homeless population has to do with a release of inmates from the county jail due to overcrowding, and “perhaps people with mental illness or misdemeanor offences might be released” without any where to go.

People who rotate out of local mental health facilities are sent to the local mission, which releases them back on the streets after thirty days. Jackson believes if you don’t have a mental illness upon becoming homeless, you can develop a mental illness rather quickly while attempting to survive on the streets. As far as SB 43 is concerned, Jackson said,

I don’t know where that is going now. I just know I read the law. And I opposed it. And I said so loudly and publicly in and forum that I could, including radio. Now it’s being promoted. It’s one sentence, and it basically says, ‘if you’re poor, and you can’t take care of yourself, then we can come and grab’. This is dangerous and its implications are lost on most people. Our director of county behavioral health has been pushing it. He was invited by the most extreme right-wing counselor to come and do a presentation for the city council. All of a sudden, these arch conservatives who normally want to do no services are acting with compassion, right? Well, how smart do you have to be to see that maybe there’s something there that doesn’t add up. Well, you have to be smarter than 99.9% of the people. 57% of Americans can’t read above an eighth-grade level. Like, that’s pretty telling.

One reason for a large population of mentally ill homeless people is due to what some interviewees declared as a loss of the “nuclear” family. Sam believes this. He states, “There are no real family units anymore...people’s families don’t help them...that’s pretty common among mentally ill patients”. Laura believes this. She states, “In the past, people’s families intervened

and put them in a hospital for their whole life. And it's not the person's choice. They could have been better off on their own. The person needs to be at the center of that decision. We cannot allow family members to have that authority".

Drug Addiction. Julian stated, "What people need to get out of homelessness is a friend, purpose and hope" and "We're not gonna say if you don't give your life to Jesus, we're not going to help you. But the option is there. So you get life skills, some discipleship, and that's where you connect with your new friends and new community from the church. And then we work on creatively getting them into some kind of place maybe axillary dwelling units (ADU's)".

All the interviewees bewailed the lack of real family units, and a lot of this is due, in their many opinions, to domestic violence, drug abuse by parents and abuse as children that causes what Adam refers to as *arrested development*. ACES was mentioned by several of the interviewees. For instance, Laura related that after the many wildfires and the ensuing homelessness and mental health problems that emerged, that "we already had the highest ACES scores in the state," and Adam stated that he believes most homeless persons operate at about a ten-year-old maturity level. Adam related to this researcher that surveys conducted through his facility, revealed that "the average age that someone started using drugs, including heroin and methamphetamine, was six years old. Oftentimes it was parents or immediate family members who were forcing those drugs on to them". He also explained that people also enduring "inhumane things happening to them" causes them to "willfully start using in their pre adolescence to escape the reality of that pain. So between six and ten, you're using drugs, right? And what happens is arrested development kicks in at whatever age you start using. Your maturity and education are stunted at that level".

He also told this researcher, “Our county is and always has been the capital of methamphetamine production for California. We have an extremely high level of child abuse, extremely high rate, probably due to all the meth. There are a lot of meth addicts here and they sell their kids at the local truck stop for meth”.

Summary. Theme two uncovers the problems of some of the homeless individuals, that of, mental illness or drug addiction. A lack of services addressing both afflictions is being addressed in the present time by the leasing of hotels in both counties to alleviate the numbers of people on the streets, with services being offered for both mental illness and drug addictions being the catalysts for temporary housing efforts. **RQ1, RQ2, RQ5, RQ6 and RQ7** were answered in this theme. The counties offer the basics of mental health treatment and there are some drug addiction programs offered, but not enough. Advocates are reaching people in encampments and attempting to find them programs that will answer their problems with mental illness and drug treatment programs, along with transitional housing programs that have begun in Redding, specifically, within the last year.

Theme 3: There is a Lack of Affordable Housing.

The following **RQ**’s are answered in this theme.

RQ1. What is the City of Redding doing to address the homeless issue?

RQ2. What is the City of Chico doing to address the homeless issue?

Evictions. As rents rise, there are more evictions. Evictions have compounded since the end of the moratorium on collection of rents throughout the pandemic (USA today, August 1, 2022). This creates the encampment of homeless persons in certain areas of the cities, including public parks, canyons, thoroughfares, and river beds (Weber, March 22, 2023).

Leroy was adamant when running for office, that the

“solution to homelessness, ultimately, is more housing. And we need to focus on getting more housing, make it a priority. We can’t put parking for housing, we can’t put, you know, abstract notions of neighborhood compatibility. Governor Newsom sending money down for housing and that depends on what money you’re talking about. I think it’s unfortunate that there are largely two separate camps. There’s money for housing and there’s money for homelessness, and that means enforcement. Unfortunately, a lot of that has gone through audits and the money just like, vaporized. There’s a lot of bureaucratic regulations that make it very difficult to spend money effectively. The biggest draw to Project Roomkey was paying rent for these motels rather than building motels or requiring buildings that can be permanently used for housing”.

Jackson offered this view. “If you have nine houses and you have ten people, one person loses. Who loses? Well, it’s the person with a brain injury, it’s the person with the mental illness, especially with childhood trauma. The person who can’t fight back or compete as effectively as others. And that’s exactly why all these people are out there, why we have 500,000 to a million people homeless nationwide, because we haven’t kept up on enough social housing and delivery of services to make a sound system”.

When Christians consider the fact that there is not enough shelter space or permanent housing, perhaps they can consider whether their church, with all of its rooms and furniture, could become a shelter for the homeless, at least during the coldest time of the year. Nick’s church does this, and sometimes in summer, if it is hot enough to be dangerous. Common sense would dictate that there are more than enough resources to care for one’s homeless population, but Christians need to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance, and then follow that guiding, even in the face of ridicule and apprehension by others. By pushing on and doing what is right for the homeless population, perhaps God will restore the church.

Summary. Theme three involves the fact that there is simply not enough low-income housing to satisfy the requirements of housing many of the homeless people on the streets of these cities. All across the nation, and California is no exception, many average Americans are finding themselves priced out the housing market. In the past couple of years, efforts have been

made to build more housing, however, most housing costs are still out of reach for most people. As covid migration has shifted the populations of the world, so too, has Redding and Chico seen their populations grow, increasing the need for more housing. **RQ1** and **RQ2** demonstrate that the cities are building more housing, but affordability remains to be seen. **RQ7** is answered by the fact that more housing is being built.

Theme 4: Cities Unwilling to Address the Issue with Foresight and Ingenuity.

The following **RQ's** are answered in this theme.

RQ1. What is the City of Redding doing to address the homeless issue?

RQ2. What is the City of Chico doing to address the homeless issue?

RQ7. Do attitudes regarding the homeless affect policy making?

The Response of the Cities. Another thing agreed on by most, if not all of the participants, is the idea of governmental indifference, if not downright hostility towards policy making regarding homeless issues. Nick believes that due to a false idea of a “homeless industrial complex” causes both sides of the issue to shy away from doing anything and Leroy concurred that the idea of a “homeless industrial complex” is prevalent and reminded me that his first work with the homeless, feeding people during the pandemic, paid him a mere \$200.00 a week salary and he also stated that he was the “most broke person to ever sit on the city council”. Obviously, these individuals whom God sent for this researcher to interview are definitely not fighting this cause for self-enrichment, but for true compassion and caring of their fellow human beings.

Laura states,

One of the solutions our city has done is wanting to kind of warehouse services so that means having all the resources funneled into one location. Great from an administrative perspective, terrible for people on the streets. Because especially for mental health clients, because if they have an episode, they get kicked out and have just burned out

every solution”. She continues, “My magic wand is to have pods of small personal spaces throughout the community because that makes more sense. Yes, it costs more. There is certainly going to be more staff, but the success rate would be phenomenally higher because you have only like six or eight people in a homey setting where they feel like they’re welcomed. Not in a warehouse that looks like a prison. They want to be efficient, but I think effectiveness is more important.

Leroy related to the researcher that outside private developers are swooping into the city to build apartments complexes intended to be low-income housing, however, he has issues with these activities. “It does not create situations where people are able to have a higher quality of life. And it doesn’t align with our climate change goals. It doesn’t align with our community design goals. And I think that’s unfair, and a huge waste of opportunity”. He also believes that the city’s homeless funding is “sort of like, holding us over in the meantime and trying to mitigate the effects that are focused on other people, not the people who are experiencing homelessness”. He continued that the “one hopeful thing for the city, and something that I would do is where we would allow people to implement more manageable projects like expanding a house into multiple units, adding units by converting garages more often or building small apartments more broadly, and things that don’t require big bank loans”.

There are some politicians, like Kevin Crye of Shasta County’s Board of Supervisors who don’t believe that government should have a role in taking care of homeless issues. A conservative recently elected to the board, Crye was asked at a recent townhall meeting about the homeless issue. His reply was “I don’t think it’s the government’s job to do a lot of this stuff. I think it’s churches and private citizens,” Crye said (Benda, March 18, 2023). This is a prevalent attitude within the halls of city and county governments. It should be noted that Mr. Crye and two other board members are more concerned with getting rid of Dominion voting machines, and enlisting the financial and legal assistance of Mike Lindell, Donald Trump’s former associate,

than assisting the people on the streets of the city of Redding in dire straits (Anguiano, March 4, 2023).

Summary. Theme four discusses the lack of concern many cities and counties have displayed when it comes to solving the homeless crisis. From housing people on an airport tarmac in 110+ degrees to playing what Leroy describes as “whack a mole” attempts to close encampments and move people along, it seems that many times cities are looking for an answer that just means move ‘em along”. **RQ1, RQ2, and RQ7** are answered in this theme. Both counties are attempting to create policies that assist the homeless, however, imagination and creativity fall short as taxpayers insist their funds should not pay for someone else’s housing.

Theme 5: The Homeless Issue is a Civil and Human Rights Issue.

The following **RQ**’s are answered in this theme.

RQ5. What are homeless advocates doing regarding homelessness in Redding?

RQ6. What are homeless advocates doing regarding homelessness in Chico?

RQ7. Do attitudes regarding the homeless affect policy making?

Civil and Human Rights? The criminalization of the homeless is more and more evident as states and locales create barriers to the homeless in denying bathrooms, water fountains, closed public spaces like parks, no camping ordinances and other common human activities that place homeless persons at risk for legal problems with tickets, fines, and incarceration. “There is a war on the homeless,” says Joe. He believes “the mission is a political arm of the city”. Mike states that “homelessness is a result of choices made by politicians, the real estate industry, churches and our community”.

Laura states, “I did a lot of research about policing and mental health. Like the training at the police academy. Do you know they’re only given one day, eight hours to cover everything

from autism, mental health, everything, eight hours, that's all they get in their training. How many hours for military tactics and guns? 150 hours”.

Jackson asks, “What rights are they entitled to as refugees? They’re economic refugees. So if you look at what refugees are entitled to, under, like the UN charter, there is no such thing in America. As a matter of fact, we were never signatory. As far as the passage of a homeless bill of rights to try to secure the homeless as being a class, the ACLU wrote a position paper on that, that was very supportive of the idea, but only ten percent of the legislature approved. I think people have a right to water. I think they have a right to air. I think they have a right to food, to stay warm, and the right to toilet access twenty-four hours a day. These are things that are non-negotiable”.

He relates how a serial murderer in the prison system gets these things, but we don’t, as a society, see the need to offer the same to our homeless population.

Julian believes that people can’t see themselves in the homeless population.

In America, we’ve become so individualistic. We don’t really know what discipleship is. Jesus was 100% come follow me to live together, devoted to discipleship. Here in America, we don’t really know what discipleship is. So even if a church accepts you, it will be tainted by the way they have been discipled. So, discipleship has really weakened the American church and we got to look at that and say, it’s weak. So even now with some of our advocates, I’m saying things like, Michael is down there on the weekends (in the camps). You’ve got to bring him in and do something with him on the weekend. We’ve got to be friends. We’ve got to be family. Jesus was from a culture that was group oriented, not individualistic. We can put up refugee camps all over the world. We can do it for Africans. We can do it here.

Jackson, though not a Christian states, “the only thing that interests me about a belief system is whether the belief system allows people to become moral agents. Because to me, if you’re going to proclaim yourself part of the church, then you should be being true to the word, Jesus and all that stuff. Being a moral agent means alleviating suffering and oppression. Standing up for justice”.

Jackson began feeding people in Chico because the city stopped a church from feeding the homeless in the city plaza. Jackson found the situation unfair and began his own crusade.

There was a voice that told me, ‘listen, this thing with the removal of the church from the city plaza, because I would ride my bike through there and see them and I wasn’t part of them. But this is like a beautiful jewel in the city, right? What happened to that? Well, they were serving food every Sunday evening for about ten years, and they decided it was time to clean up downtown, and they didn’t want to see anybody feeding homeless people. They began to have a ranger go out and threaten them with citation. ‘You don’t have a permit to do this.’ Blah. Blah. Blah. We’re going to go through with the permit demand and its gonna cost you \$300 a month, which they didn’t have. But they were gonna go with it anyway. A member of the council, who owned a downtown hotel that faced the plaza, denied the permit. However, the church moved their feeding area to the municipal building. An article written for the local paper expressed the idea that people are still getting fed, so what’s the problem? Well, the problem is that you just took this moment where people were meeting in an inclusive way in a visible place on the plaza and trying to hide it. Somehow, something in me just said, no, this is really wrong. And the whole climate of the city started to change, and we became the community we are today, which is the kind of community that has reputation for viciousness in our laws and practices against the poor and homeless.

Laura believes, “a solution is asking people about what their strengths are because finding out what people’s strengths are is helping them achieve their own goals”. She continued, “Everybody’s got an idea of how to help those poor people. But nobody’s asking those poor people what they want. They want exactly what they need. So number one, there needs to be a concerted effort to go out individually with each person and help them achieve their goals. That’s the way we do it, but it goes across the board, because peer support is part of whole person care. You don’t just go out and ask what are your mental health needs? You say, ‘what are your needs’?”

Laura thinks people need to stop thinking they know better what someone needs and stop putting the mentally ill into a box.

I think another issue that goes hand in hand with that is stigma. Because, like I said, people are afraid of people. That’s why I’m doing this. And they’re afraid of people, like I said, if someone’s being loud, who says we’re not allowed to be loud? That’s a cultural thing. You know... that we all have to act a certain way. And when we live in a country

that's supposed to be about freedom for individuals, right? We, as a society, need to understand that people get angry. People have delusions. And if someone's sleeping on the sidewalk in front of your storefront? Why is it that we react with a call to the cops and getting them out of here? Instead of offering a pillow? Then there's this fear that people with mental illness or people on the streets are harmful or dangerous. And that's really a misnomer. Most people with mental illness are more likely to hurt themselves than other people. They're more likely to be victims of crime, rather than the perpetrator. Third, we need to address the outlying issues. We have an income and housing crisis.

Adam said, "So the thing I'm 100% on is you have to be able to build relationships. But you first have to realize that it is humanity that has failed people from their very early age". He continued," Humanity failed people, but not just failed, humanity has preyed upon so many of these people and abused them. And so when we come along 30 years later to show them their value, we have to build trust first. And sometimes it takes years".

Summary. Theme five involves discussion of the civil rights of the homeless person. From criminalizing people whose activities involve sleeping on the street, to using the bathroom behind a bush, many homeless people incur criminal records for activities the housed person would never get a charge for. America helps many nations when there is a disaster, like an earthquake or hurricane. Even in this nation, the government is there to assist with food and shelter for the average person during disasters, however, when it comes to homelessness, there seems to be blinders on, and very little assistance has been offered. Some interviewees likened being homeless to being a refugee from another part of the world. **RQ5, RQ6 and RQ7** are answered in this theme as advocates attempt to speak for the downtrodden by protests, city, and county meetings where they speak before boards about the homeless situation.

Theme 6: The Gospel is Not Readily Available on the Streets Where the Homeless Are.

The following **RQ's** are answered in this theme.

RQ3. What are Christian leaders doing to address the issue of homelessness in Redding?

RQ4. What are Christian leaders doing to address the issue of homelessness in Chico?

RQ7. Do attitudes regarding the homeless affect policy making?

The Lack of a Gospel Presence. Adam states,

Yes, we absolutely need street outreach. 100%. And here's how I define it. If the mission, and I've said this to staff and they almost crucified me for it; but if the mission does a chapel service, once a night, where people come in, they sit there, and they listen to us preach a sermon, and that's what we're doing for the gospel, we have failed. And that's awful. We didn't do enough. If the mission never preached a single service in our history, from here on out, but we invited church members to come down and sit with someone and eat a meal with them, and just love on them, we just became God. We're doing this now. And it's growing. But it's not the impact it needs to be. If I've got 2000 people here, I want 2000 members to adopt one person for an entire year.

Beau and Nick both discussed compassion fatigue. Nick said, "I have had my bouts of compassion fatigue, I'm tired. My clergy colleagues are too. So we do our best to encourage one another". He also believes that the gospel is being shown through works, if not in the actual word. Beau stated,

You know, the two things that I think come to mind are one, I think there's compassion fatigue amongst some of the faith leaders. And then the second thing I would identify is....ah. Again, let's see, how would I describe it? There's the perception of an institutional problem. And here's what I mean. I think a lot of the folks in the pews of the churches have a mentality that something should be done. But that something should be right. And that something should be done by somebody, but not me.

Joe is concerned about the fact that many pastors could show up at city council meetings and speak for the poor, but they do not. Nick believes the political polarization of progressives vs. conservatives in his city is also evident in faith communities,

I would say the number of faith communities that are heavily involved in ministry to the poor and the homeless are way outnumbered by ministries that want to convince people that the reason they are experiencing homelessness is because of something they've done. That it's a character deficit which is totally unbiblical. Both sides are so unwilling to talk to each other, nothing is being done. And the people are suffering. They're cold and criminalized to the point that they can't make a move. However, there are things within

the Christian faith we can't talk about, and this is one of them. People are polarized, we don't know what to do, the situation is getting worse, but I don't know what to do anymore, except to just do what Jesus tells me to do.

Nick continues,

corrupt religion can get into bed with corrupt politics and some of these church organizations desire to 'take over parts of government, like, we're gonna put our people in there and we're gonna, do it with force, and they do it. You have to test the fruits of the spirit; love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control, all that is good. If something causes envy, strife, jealousy, hatred, you know, all that is bad. You're going to know whether something is good or bad by testing the fruits of spirit.

Adam states,

The churches have been led to believe that it's not their problem, you know. The government's going to take care of it. Or there are some others who subscribe to this idea that you know, you're in poverty, because God doesn't love you and you're not worthy or whatever those situations are. The church needs to be reeducated about their mandate to help the poor, the foreigners, the orphans. The woman who's caught in adultery was brought before Jesus, as they are wanting him to condemn her. Jesus says, well, what is it the law says? The law says you got to stone her. Okay. Well, guess what? We're not going to follow the law today. That's right. Because we're going to show her some mercy. He brought honor to her shame. He took his honor in a collective society and covered her with his person. Then he died to cover the shame of the whole world. If we could teach the church that God's heart for the broken is that if we could teach people how to live, we wouldn't have poverty or suffering, because anywhere there is suffering or poverty, that's where the church would flock. The church would understand that that's not a 36-year-old adult with the heroin needle passed out in the gutter. Now, that's a six-year-old child. Like, if our city manager was driving home today, and saw a six-year-old child laying in a gutter with a heroin needle, he would pull his car over, pick him up and would weep for that child, and say, 'There is no way I'm letting you go.

Beau offered the researcher a "listening survey" he conducted pre covid in his town and it is attached as Appendix F to this paper. An unpublished and informal survey, this researcher took the liberty of masking the identity of the city it was conducted in to preserve his anonymity.

He stated,

One of the things that we wanted to see out of that survey was to see our community's perception of the homeless situation. And there was pretty good recognition that the homeless situation is very complex. There's a lot of attention being given to trying to fund construction for affordable housing units. The city and the community both have a

number of steps that they're trying to take regarding several voucher programs in the Rapid Rehousing category. All the money for housing vouchers for HUD and the city's program are available, however, there is just the lack of actual availability of affordable places and landlords.

Although the complete survey is attached at the end of this study, this researcher has included here a list of questions asked by Beau to various evangelical pastors in his town and their responses. This survey could be used as a small window into the world of evangelical thought regarding the homeless. Here is a list of the questions and responses from pastors in Beau's town.

1. Who do you think the homeless are in our community?

- Multiple types - sleep on our property
- veterans, drug addicts, released prisons, people in need of shelter, foster kids, a whole group of people who are wanting to be hidden, mentally ill, person/family one or two paychecks away from being homeless, women leaving abusive situations
- 45% are mentally ill, 50% are drug/alcohol abusers

2. Do you feel like the homeless situation in our community is getting better or worse, and why?

- getting better (fewer homeless) - because their hiding places are gone, and because Fire resources are gone (since people came here after the fire to try and get access to those resources, and now that the resources are gone, so are those homeless)
- getting worse - increase in visitations on our property - think they are just moving from place to place
- getting worse - they are becoming more emboldened and not taking advantage of services being offered

- About the same - Home Depot area as an example
- Worse - because of drug issues - legalization of drugs has made the problem worse
- it's only going to continue to get worse because of the drug issues
- 25-50% are people who are not employable because they can't pass drug tests (mostly due to marijuana) - then flagged as unemployable with temp agencies - especially those who are 16-25 years old

3. What do you think are the major root causes of homelessness in our community?

- drug addiction (primarily meth & heroine)
- breakdown of relationships - bridges with family support networks have been burned
- Dumping ground for prisoners - High Desert comes and drops people off here all the time
- Mental health issues - very high percentage - not a very good system in Shasta County to address this issue - ERs are overwhelmed
- Mental illness are tough issues especially with medications - in the church in particular, because these people can't be helped with just counselors, but need doctors to prescribe
- Segment of them who are wanting to be homeless due to a general lack of accountability and ambition

4. How do you think our community homeless population compares to other communities in Northern California?

- One person recently spent time in Sacramento - feels the same here as there - unsafe

- Homeless are drawn to lots of resources here - told to come to Shasta County because we are very generous here
- There is a network that exists between homeless where they communicate with each other about where the resources are
- This is a central location where people get dumped
- Also an area where there is a high resource of supply of illegal drugs
- We are the main community north of Sacramento, so this would naturally be hub for homeless
- Since we are a smaller community, we don't compare to larger cities, so not as bad as that, but in comparison to other small communities, our situation is worse
- If there isn't enforcement, then it welcomes them more (Rocklin (police immediately arrested them and took them out of their city) vs Roseville (let them be) as example

5. What makes our community situation different than those other communities?

- 3 Hospitals in our community - that creates access to healthcare, so there is a steady stream of homeless in our ERs - medical access
- We have a community culture/temperature of wanting to help - some cities where if you come in they will ship you to somewhere else. We are more compassionate as a community as a whole - people don't know what to do with them, but at least they will try and be kind
- Significant lack of education of the community in general around these issues
- Having a casino in our community is a big deal - there is lots of illegal activity that happens there at the casino, so it becomes a fallback point for the homeless and illegal activity to gather. That same thing is true with Walmart on the East side of

town - it's also a fallback point

- One of the problems is, If you concentrate resources or places for them to stay - that is a very bad situation because it draws them all together, and then they feed off of each other
- Our community is a drop off point for prison release
- Significant lack of mental health services, which should be mandated by the courts for chronic homeless cases

6. What kind of personal encounters have you had with the homeless in our community?

- Good, bad, ugly
- Everyday encounters at churches with people coming to ask for assistance
- Some churches have had to start nightly patrols on their campuses
- If you offer them assistance, then after a while the homeless get an entitlement mentality
- Finding lots of needles on campuses
- One individual used to personally carry bags of items in their care to give out to homeless (some clothes, toiletries, food, etc.), but 80% of people didn't want bag, just wanted money; mostly quit stopping to even engage
- Personal encounters reinforced the idea that most of them just want money, not help
- Illustration of Portland that went to a voucher system as a city instead of giving out money to people
- Few churches engaged in street ministry - go out into the community with

sandwiches, but that created conflict with police. The churches were trying to build relationships with people, but PD felt like it was enabling the problem - so eventually they just stopped. Now that church targets their gifts to known entities like the mission or other compassionate ministries. They have a very strong concern of building an adversarial relationship with police

- Volunteer at mission and have encountered both kind and sweet individuals, and mean and aggressive individuals

7. How do those encounters impact your thoughts and feelings about the homeless in general?

- It's complicated! So much diversity of problems to be addressed
- Those personal encounters create cynicism - start looking for lies to catch them in when they come to their churches for assistance
- When the homeless act as if they don't want any help except for money, causes us to just stop offering them help - perception is they don't want help and therefore offering them help won't do anything
- If people want to get help they can, but if they don't, they won't - so if we help when they don't want to change, then we are just enabling them
- Lots of people don't want to take advantage of the resources in our community
- 95% of people when the mission is mentioned they don't want to have anything to do with that. That response by the homeless then creates cynicism on our part
- Sometimes have a hard time thinking about them as "people" vs "just homeless"
- We feel like we are between a rock & hard place - between cynicism and the hard

difficulty of actually helping because it's so complicated, especially with Mental Illness

- Mobile Crisis Van helpful, but these issues will take years for change - tough to invest in helping the homeless (especially the mentally ill or drug addicted) when you are trying to offer help to the people who are somewhat healthy in our own churches

8. What do you think are the solutions we need to utilize in order to impact homelessness in our community?

- Difficult because for years there weren't any places trying to address mental health issues in our community
- Nothing in our county to go for mental illness issues - "VA doesn't even have it for veterans"
- Transitional Housing is a great resource, but they are at capacity. "We could use 10 more of those, but there's just a lack of funding."
- There has to be a large change in our culture as a whole. As long as we release prisoners in our community, and we don't have mental health capacities, that change won't happen.
- Sometimes we create our own problems as a community. For example, next door to rescue mission there is a marijuana grow sight. We are shooting ourselves in the foot.
- Marijuana is a gateway drug that leads to so many other things. Now that it's legal it's creating so many other problems. "I have read lots of studies and most people are just totally ignorant about the problems this produces. And city officials are only

looking at the bottom line of the money they can get from marijuana.”

- 99.9% of victories we have seen have gone through the mission
- The local mental health facility is trying to do good work

9. Have you heard any information about a “low-barrier shelter” and do you have any thoughts or ideas about what that is and why some people might think it’s necessary?

- In favor of making something available to people who want it, but the vast majority don’t want the help
- Would like to see success from an agency or a community in which they have had success before we would just start something like this.
- Desire to embracing programs that already work
- Think the mission is almost basically a low-barrier shelter at this point, but the homeless don’t want to use it or take advantage of it because they don’t like confinement, or being around other people, or being required to do anything, or simply not wanting to have anything to do with God

10. Have you ever heard of the “housing first” model for addressing homelessness in communities, and do you have any thoughts or ideas about what that is and why some people might think it’s a solution.

- Not very familiar with it
- Desire a model that includes structure, mentoring, “parenting”, vs just a roof
- Most people just take advantage of the various situations like this and “work the system” without any real change
- Two most significant issues face homeless are mental illness and drug addiction,

so whatever solutions we come up with, they must be able to address those root issues

- Housing first is an attempt to create a short-term solution to get the public “off the back” of government, but will that really change anything?
- This idea would be a temporary fix, at best, and would only really work for those people who are homeless due to circumstances beyond their control (medical, physical, etc.

11. How do you think you would be willing to be involved in working toward solutions on this issue in our community?

- Willing to invest in something that is a real solution that is working toward real change
- Some type of collective church software tracking program? that you would do networking and sharing of information with each other, including other agencies in town
- Some of them struggle with “God’s money” going to government programs, which is a perception from congregants
- In some older congregations - everyone feels a “need” to do something, but if the leadership of the church wanted to actually be a part of helping, they are worried that their congregation members wouldn’t want to have “those people in here” - it’s an us vs them mentality that would require some significant congregational education
- They feel the struggle of dealing with struggling people in the midst of all the demands of their current congregations (if they were to bring some homeless into

their church to try and help)

- The homeless need community (support, relationships, etc.) in order to change
- Willing to get behind some type of compelling vision - a vision that would be comprehensive in nature
- Some of them feel that if they were to try and start some new initiatives, there would be a perception by their congregation that “we are already trying to help, so why do we need to do something else?”
- Recognize the need to help change the perception in congregations
- Want to be told what to do to help, but feel like they aren’t being told what to do or how to really help, so they are just trying to do something (small steps), but it’s not really producing systemic change, which is what they would like

This survey is important as a demonstration of viewpoints regarding the homeless in Beau’s community.

Although not a believer, Mike believes in wisdom and spiritual ethics. He states, “If you help someone who is desperate, they are usually very grateful. If you ignore someone who’s desperate, they get more desperate. Who do you want to live with? In your community? Do you want more desperate people or more grateful people? I like grateful. That’s the wisdom. Help people. They’ll be grateful. This is born out through human experience. This is not revolutionary”.

Julian states, “There’s nothing we can take credit for. It’s really grace. He gives us everything we have. We should be equipping churches to befriend the homeless. We need the church. America should learn by now that you just can’t segregate all the poor people into low-cost housing projects. It’s a community problem”.

Jackson declares,

I think that concentrating on the suffering is for me, the voice that I need to return to, for the information I need about my moral existence. So instead of seeking joy and love, the voice of suffering leads me to anger and rage and stepping on toes. I'll call it righteous indignation, like the bible relates. There's Jesus clearing out the temple. Jesus was calling out the powerbrokers of his time. Constantine comes along and absorbs the church into the state to what we have now. Well, there's two fundamental teachings in the gospel. One says, you know, give everything to the poor and follow me, and the other one is not to use violence to defend yourself. Neither of those things are compatible with the state. Now you have this whole imaginary process of marginalizing that in the midst of a belief system. This is why I shy away from organized religion because they've refused to take the bible at face value. I just abstain because I don't see where these churches, and no matter what denomination, are actually acting in a biblical manner. This is why we need some reform, and why I think people need an alternative way to think. The voice of suffering talks to me about culpability. And it talks to me about contrition. And if I act on that, it's leading me to a different kind of moral awareness. I'm here to tell people how they're going to lose something by engaging on a moral basis because you do lose. And that's the only authentic truth that I can speak to. I think performing in any other way diverts us from the task of being more deeply committed to pulling back the curtain on what real morality looks like. My friends ask me, why do I do this work? I don't have to. But I tell them, there's a small pebble of hope in my shoe. And if I could get rid of it, that would end a lot of my torment and misery because I would cease to have any motivation to engage. There's some little, tiny particle of hope there.

He continued,

If you're doing charity without justice, then my point of view is when I go the plaza with my truck full of crap every week, okay, now if I'm thinking my role in the world is to give out cheese sticks, and that's why I'm here, then that would be completely missing a fundamental component. That would be that when you do charity, if you're not talking about justice at the same time, you might not be biblical, or Christian, necessarily, but I think you'd become kind of a useful idiot to the system. Because you're covering up a system. By giving charity, we're giving these crumbs. And you know, the bible is full of information about true justice. You have to be walking with people as they start changing their minds about their own lives. However, the root of all this is forty years of failure to provide housing and services for the poorest people.

Bobby believes that the gospel message isn't very widespread among the homeless population of his county and believes a homeless church should be established due their "inability to integrate into what I would call middle class churches and the inability of those churches to accept them".

Summary. Theme six was surprising, but disappointing. **RQ3, RQ4,** and **RQ7** are answered in this theme. For many of the interviewees, it was obvious that the nearby churches weren't doing very much to assist the homeless in their communities. And the gospel is hard to find in the population that needs it the most. This homeless population where the widows, orphans, strangers, and poor reside are the streets of America.

Data Analysis and Findings

The data analysis portion of this project reveals many points that are important to note. First, the homeless population continues to grow. Second, the price of housing continues to be out of reach for the average person, much less a person who is poverty stricken. Third, relief is still time away, as cities and counties decide what actions to take to house the homeless, and fourth, churches need to do more to be involved in their communities to help people with basic needs, but most of all, with the gospel message of hope. In analyzing the data from the interviews, themes emerged that demonstrate the key problems in solving homelessness in Redding and Chico. In examining the answers to the research questions, the researcher was able to compile thematic information and demonstrate the key issues in relation to the homeless populations of these two communities.

Reference questions **RQ1** and **RQ2** were both answered. The cities of Redding and Chico refuse to build new temporary shelter systems in favor of new housing and both cities are attempting to control the homeless population with new transitional housing attempts, along with a data base collection of information about the homeless population, such as in Redding. Much is left to be desired, as the advocates explained that the cities lack creativity and money for their homeless dilemmas. **RQ3** and **RQ4** are answered in that we find there are some churches who are offering food or clothing, but none who offer shelter, with the exception of Nick's church

who house people in winter. Most churches in both cities do not have any activities that involve helping the homeless. **RQ5** and **RQ6** were answered as homeless advocates offer food, clothing, showers, and assistance outside of the city or county's scope and often at the expense of the advocates themselves. **RQ7** clearly demonstrates that yes, attitudes towards the homeless definitely affects policy, whether it comes to criminalization of the homeless or whether it comes to violation of constitutional freedoms such as the collection of data on each homeless person as they traverse the system of food banks, for example, or transitional housing options.

A Shelter Crisis

With the clean-up of homeless encampments and transitional housing taking place in local hotels, the two cities are attempting to address the shelter crisis in their respective communities. Funds are flowing from Sacramento to address the problem, and although there are now attempts and questions about funding tiny homes and pallet homes, the lack of immediate shelters, particularly low barrier shelters in which there are no contracts made or requirements to stay, remain one of the biggest concerns in these communities. There are efforts in Redding to offer transitional housing with services until long term permanent housing can be found, but this has only happened in the last six to nine months, well after these interviews were conducted.

As stated in chapter two, "Homelessness is about more than rooflessness. A home is not just a physical space: it provides roots, identity, security, a sense of belonging and a place of emotional wellbeing" (Plos editors, 2008, p. 1639). McBride agrees. "'homelessness is like a slow execution, [since] the monotony of the day, the exhaustion, the punishment your body takes from the weather, the lack of healthy food, the slavery of labor pools—all lead to death'" (McBride, 2017, p. 128). "The homeless individual has a story that needs to be heard and understood. The good news of hope in the gospel story has saving power. "Hope for the sheep

that are lost or scattered among the nations is anchored in God's determined and direct intervention" (Laniak, 2006, p. 154). But this view will only cement itself with the Christian, if he/she is willing to view the big picture of the causes of poverty and homelessness. For instance, Bradley states, "The War on Poverty in the United States, which officially got started in the mid-1960's, could just as well be called the War on the Poor if we focus on its effects, rather than its objectives" (Bradley, 2014, p. 349).

Mental Health and Drug Addiction Services are Lacking

It is true that many homeless people are drug addicted or have a mental health illness and therefore do not have the capacity to seek help with either daily resources or help with their afflictions. However, there are many who simply can't find the funding, or the assistance to kick drugs without rehabilitation services readily available.

In California, a re-institutionalization movement has begun with the newly enacted Care Court system, designed to expand criteria for placing an individual in a mental treatment facility. Senate Bill 43 (Curwen, March 1, 2023) would expand the definition of a 5150 mental health hold to enlarge the conditions that constitute gravely disabled. This legislation can also be used for the drug addicted.

This researcher related in chapter two that many smaller organizations and ministries throughout the country offer help by giving the basics of food, clothing, and shelter. Then there are churches and other organizations that offer more than just the basics. Some offer job training and housing assistance. Drug addiction programs are also available for those needing that type of assistance. Gas money, bus passes, and even a message phone can make the difference between someone being able to climb out of homelessness and abject poverty and then beginning to feel like a human being with dignity and a sense of purpose again.

A Lack of Affordable Housing

There is a shortage of single-family residences and rental properties are scarce (Gerber, June 7, 2023, para. 10). Some people, who live on a fixed income, for example, still can't afford a home as rental prices for a modest three-bedroom home or apartment, in many areas, far exceed full time minimum wage amounts and this has created the "working homeless" (Wagner, 2018, para. 3). "According to a recent report from the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, eight million Americans pay more than half their income on rent, a larger percentage of the growing rental population is extremely low-income renters, and the nation has a shortage of 7.2 million affordable rental units (NLIHC, 2018)" (McCormick, 2018, para. 13).

Revisiting chapter two, Babcock writes, "Sometimes all it takes to create homelessness is a shortage of rental units. In June of 2016, a study showed that Los Angeles needed an additional 382,000 rental units to keep up with demand" (Babcock, 2007, p. 11). This situation has gotten worse, and a lack of affordable housing is the agreed upon crux of America's homeless crisis, albeit with different reasonings. Cleveland affirms Bass's contention.

...there is a lack of housing. They also agree on the one approach that has clearly proved effective: providing free, permanent supportive housing for mentally or physically ill, substance-abusing chronically homeless people. Beyond that, conservatives and liberals propose different remedies. Conservatives emphasize freeing local housing markets from stifling regulation. Liberals emphasize coercing markets to increase the supply of "affordable" housing by various means, including rent control and obstacles to gentrification". Such approaches amount to treating symptoms. They do not address the larger problem that, due to growing inequality, a substantial portion of U.S. residents are housing insecure in that they cannot easily afford minimal housing (Cleveland, 2020, para. 6).

Cities Unwilling to Apply Foresight and Ingenuity

In chapter two, according to Cleveland, the problem is wealth inequality in America, while Babcock believes a substantial, continuous lack of care for veterans, the mentally ill, and other groups contributes to the issue of homelessness. Babcock advocates for Christian solutions,

while Cleveland believes politicians should fix the problems by increasing the minimum wage, as Cleveland demonstrates that many people simply can't afford the rents that are available.

“Neither conservatives or liberals address the big question: why such a large fraction of the U.S. population, at least the 12 percent below the miserable family poverty line of \$26,000 a year, are paying 50 percent or more of their incomes for inadequate housing, leaving them at risk of eviction and a stint in a shelter” (Cleveland, 2020, para. 56) or years on the street.

Whether people are homeless, due to lack of affordable housing or low wages, a lack of mental health treatment, drug addiction, alcoholism, domestic abuse, or any number of other reasons, everyone wants a home. However, there is a small number of chronically homeless people who “have chosen to embrace their economic circumstances,” and adapt, “to a homeless lifestyle” (Babcock, 2007, p. 30).

Many locales are reluctant to tackle this issue other than cleaning up encampments. There have been concerted efforts to reclaim parks and other community spaces in both cities for public use. Nun Pon Open Space in Redding (Mangas, August 14th, 2022) and Comanche Creek in Chico (Ketchum, June 29, 2022) are local examples of a nationwide effort to reclaim public spaces that have become homeless encampments. Many misguided efforts have failed miserably, as noted previously, like Chico moving people to an airport tarmac in 110-degree weather.

Some communities, like Santa Rosa, have finally established camp sites on public land, notably their county government center lawn, recognizing that everyone who is homeless doesn't necessarily fit into the shelter system, nor are they eligible for transitional housing programs (Murphy, April 1, 2023).

With poverty and homelessness sweeping the nation, along with the economic effects of racial unrest and Covid 19, it is expected that this lack of housing problem will continue to grow.

And with this growth of poverty, more desperation, homelessness, and hopelessness will occur within the country. The poor and mostly minorities suffer, not only from a lack of attention to their physical needs, but also neglect of their spiritual wellbeing because of improper and judgmental views by the very people who should care.

The Homeless Issue is a Civil and Human Rights Issue

When one is homeless, having no place to rest, to cook, or even to clean one's body or clothes is extremely difficult, especially for those who live within the inner cities where resources are stretched thin. People need toilet facilities, shower facilities, access to laundry or clean clothes and clean bedding in order to stave off illness, scabies, and lice. Being homeless in America is a difficult proposition.

Criminalizing homeless activities such as public urination, sleeping in doorways, blocking sidewalks or the right of way for bikes (Wreden, July 17, 2023), just makes homelessness even more difficult as tickets and fines are issued for these quality-of-life crimes as well as no camping fines which cause homeless individuals to have a rap sheet of criminal activity just due to being homeless.

City ordinances have also prohibited people to take advantage of the 9th U.S. District Court ruling that explicitly prohibits "cruel and unusual punishment" of the homeless. The order states, "Turning to the merits, the panel held that the Cruel and Unusual Punishments Clause of the Eighth Amendment precluded the enforcement of a statute prohibiting sleeping outside against homeless individuals with no access to alternative shelter. The panel held that, as long as there is no option of sleeping indoors, the government cannot criminalize indigent, homeless people for sleeping outdoors, on public property, on the false premise they had a choice in the matter" (Martin vs. Boise). It should be noted in Redding, although there are encampment clean

ups taking place, the local police department has put in a moratorium on issuing camping tickets for the time being. One problem with cleanups, however, are that many homeless people lose their belongings; identifications, glasses, medications, and other necessities that are difficult to recover. Chico is erroneously proclaiming there are enough shelter beds and is continuing to issue citations for camping in undesignated areas.

Many western cities, like Chico, have and are being sued by homeless plaintiffs that assert violations of the *Martin v Boise* decision regarding sheltering and public camping (Wolcott, January 4, 2022). In Redding, enclosed public parks are off limits and a park by the Sacramento river has been placed off limits by the Fish and Game Department, leaving no relief for those seeking to use the federal ruling (Scheide, 2019, para, 35).

Other obstacles, such as architectural effects like spikes on benches and barbed wire under bridges keeps the homeless from laying down or from hiding, making them a subculture group separate from the larger population of housed people (Mutuli, February 9, 2023). This growing group of American citizens is becoming polarized and is in danger from the hatred that stems from the housed population, who see the homeless as trouble making criminals who are destructive and are to be feared. Most people have the NIMBY (Not in my backyard) attitude and simply want the homeless removed from their sight, their streets, their neighborhood, and their community.

The Gospel is not Available on the Streets

While homelessness grows, the need for the truths of the gospel message also grows and this is the crux of the homeless issue for this researcher. The hope of the gospel message is not being given to the people on the streets and many of the pastors who were interviewed agreed on this point. Although there have been those who “walk the walk” and have been in the

encampments assisting by *doing* the gospel, there are not many pastors who are preaching to the lost on the streets or in encampments, using the bible. This researcher met a homeless woman, Wilma, who said, “Even in prison, you’re given a bible” as the researcher conducted her own ministry activities. The need for the straight gospel from the scriptures is desired.

Conclusions From The Data Analysis and Findings

The discovered themes line up with the information in the Literature Review of chapter two by discussing why there is homelessness and the efforts for and against assistance for the homeless population. New information is offered that has occurred in these cities since interviews have concluded. As this researcher interviewed and revealed the thematic information gleaned from said interviews, some conclusions are evident. One fact is that the homeless situation is growing in our country at an astonishing rate. Main street America is no longer safe through property ownership and mortgages are no guarantee of security for one’s family. Once homeless, it is difficult to stay healthy and safe. Resources may or not be available, depending where one is in the country.

The interviewees all expressed a desire for more temporary shelters, transitional housing, and low-income permanent housing. They expressed a desire to educate the local governments about homelessness in hopes of getting more resources or better utilization of existing resources. Most of all, the interviewees expressed dismay over the lack of concern by their local churches in their local communities for the homeless issue.

The homeless in America are simply refugees, much as the homeless are globally. An economic war of attrition is being fought and the homeless and poor are losing. But there is hope. The story of Exodus is “a story of liberation from homeless slavery in order to be at home again with the covenant-making God, even if that requires being at home in the uninhabitable

place of wilderness” and teaches that home can be found again with God (Bouma-Pediger, 2008, p. 18). But if no one is offering the scriptures to the homeless as they languish on America’s streets, how do they know that God is their home? How can they be reconciled to God, to their families, or to society? Only by hearing the life affirming message of the gospel of Jesus Christ can they be delivered spiritually.

Believers should never fail to minister to people’s humanity no matter who they are. As the Bible gives the believer the mind of Christ and the ability to become spiritually formed to walk in obedience and faithfulness to his Word, the responsibility to others becomes part of one’s duty to God. “Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful giver” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, 2 Corinthians 9:7).

The Bible indicates that God has a special place for the poor and requires that believers should stand and defend the oppressed. The Bible makes it clear that God loves the poor and expects believers to, also. “For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set [him] in safety [from him that] puffeth at him” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Psalms 12:5). God will always protect the poor and give them provision and safety. Poverty is the economic state of most peoples of the world, and along with “failing to render godly stewardship” as Such points out, many problems that cause poverty are greed, as “the love of money,” is the “root of all evil,” as stated by Timothy (*KJV* 1798/2003, 1 Timothy 6:10) (Such, 2013, p. 7).

Evaluation of the Research Design

Determining attitudes and feelings about the homeless problem in Shasta and Butte counties required doing qualitative research. Qualitative phenomenological research is valuable

in finding out about problems and developing ideas for further research in order to delve deeper into solving problems. This researcher has concluded that the phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study, as the participants were able to freely express their feelings and emotions about their work with the homeless populations of their respective communities, which allowed them to be honest and forthcoming with frustrations and concerns that otherwise might be being ignored by other stakeholders, such as those in county government or the media. This researcher feels that this approach was valuable in discovering problems that hamper or hinder those who work with the homeless.

Homelessness is on the rise in the nation and Shasta County, California, is no exception. In this post pandemic environment, an examination of what happens next is essential to the wellbeing of the homeless population. With 5 billion Housing and Urban Development (HUD) being allocated for nationwide homelessness (HUD, 2021, para.1), and some 18 million of that American Rescue Act funding coming to the city of Redding (Chandler, 2021, para. 1), it will be a challenge for city officials to decide how to spend the city's share and whether any of the funding will be used to assist the local homeless population.

This study was conducted using a phenomenological design to collect and analyze the research data. Creswell states, "...researchers tend to collect data in the field at the site where participants experience the issue or problem under study" and "...researchers collect data themselves through examining documents, observing behavior, or interviewing participants" (Creswell, 2018, p. 181). Purposively chosen participants included those who help the homeless, such as pastors and advocates. Local county or city officials were interviewed using semi-structured questions regarding plans for possible future enhancement of homeless services.

This researcher conducted these semi-structured interviews at coffee shops, the offices of government leaders, churches of pastors in the study, and at shelter sites for homeless advocates. The same types of officials, pastors, and advocates were interviewed in the nearby town of Chico. Chico has a comparable population to Redding, so a comparison of services offered and any future plans for enhanced services were similar in scope.

The results of this phenomenological study were analyzed using audio taped participant interviews, interview observations, and field notes, along with articles from local media to achieve triangulation of data. Audio taped interviews were transcribed using Otter.AI online software and were then printed. These transcripts were checked against the audio recordings to ensure accuracy of data. The researcher went through the eleven transcripts and hand coded resulting in discovery of frequently used words and phrases. This coding information was used to create the six emergent themes: shelter crisis in each city, mental health and drug rehabilitation services are lacking, lack of affordable housing, cities unwilling or unable to help, civil and human rights issue, and finally, there is a lack of the gospel being available to the homeless on the streets.

Results

Results of this study reveal some things this researcher was interested in knowing. Theme number six is about the gospel message and whether or not the homeless population is receiving information about the saving grace of the biblical knowledge of Jesus Christ as the Savior. Sometimes when a person experiences a traumatic event, like homelessness, even a believer can have a “crisis in faith”. This is when the crisis creates an altered view of God, and theological foundations change due to the severity of the incident causing the crisis. Peter exhorts the reader

to remember that God's promises have been granted to believers in order that they may be partakers in the "divine nature" of God (*KJV*, 1798/2003, 2 Peter 1:4).

The homeless in America are simply refugees, much as the homeless are globally. An economic war of attrition is being fought and the homeless and poor are losing. But there is hope. The story of Exodus is "a story of liberation from homeless slavery in order to be at home again with the covenant-making God, even if that requires being at home in the uninhabitable place of wilderness" and teaches that home can be found again with God (Bouma-Pediger, 2008, p. 18). But if no one is offering the scriptures to the homeless as they languish on America's streets, how do they know that God is their home? How can they be reconciled to God, to their families, or to society? Only by hearing the life affirming message of the gospel of Jesus Christ can they be delivered spiritually.

It seems, however, that many in the church have lost their way when it comes to caring for the poor. In Chico, there are only eight churches that help the poor, according to Nick. In Redding, there are only a handful as well. The third forum in four to be held by the GNRM as a community service had only about forty people in attendance and was focused on the local churches and their activities regarding working for the homeless. It should be noted that the first forum was to educate Redding citizens about the city's homeless problem and had well over four hundred in attendance at the Convention Center. KRCR television news reported July 2, 2023, after the "church" forum. "You know, our churches are our greatest assets," said Jonathan Anderson, executive director of the Good News Rescue Mission. "They're really bent on relationships, and this is a population that needs relationships more than anybody. So, it's difficult, but getting the conversation started, and getting our churches on board, it's a huge first step". This researcher finds it curious that these conversations are just being held now.

Nationally, in California, and in these two cities, the first four themes are mainstream knowledge, while the last two themes require more societal education and in particular, a return to biblical mandates requiring attention to the marginalized populations in communities. The homeless population encompasses the widows, orphans, the poor and foreigners discussed in the scriptures, as needing protection and care.

Chapter Summary

This research project was conducted to determine the essence of the lived experience of those persons who assist the homeless with various needs, including food, showers, and clothing. Some participants of this study are involved in offering housing from the extreme of the elements, even if temporary, while others are working on permanent homes. But most of all, the homeless get concern and sympathy. They get love. The men and women who assist the homeless in their local communities are nothing short of heroic. They don't have to do the work they do. They do it because they love people. And they care about people's problems and needs.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter provides a summary of the results of this study and the conclusions drawn from the interview information in chapter four. It provides further information on the implications, applications, and recommendations for future research on this important topic.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to ascertain attitudes and feelings about what should be done to help the homeless by interviewing local government officials, pastors of differing theological foundations, and advocates who work with the homeless. The setting of interviews were coffee shops, governmental official offices, pastors churches, and advocates at local homeless shelters in Redding and Chico. One goal of this study was to develop a healthy and scriptural Christian leadership foundation for caring for the poor and homeless. The other goal was to determine whether attitudes are reflective in policy making regarding homeless issues.

This researcher is concerned about attitudes towards the poor and homeless of the nation. It is imperative that believers do not forget their true calling. That is, to help the oppressed and unloved and to not allow themselves to demonstrate “love that has waxed cold” (*KJV*, 1798/2009, Matthew 24:12). The biblical mandate would dictate that the widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor *are* the homeless. The church is called to “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (*King James Bible*, 1798/2003, 1 Peter 5:2-4).

“And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Matthew 25:40). This saying from Jesus is very telling when it comes to the *imago Dei*. This passage discusses who the “least of these” are. The people who hungered and were fed. The thirsty who were given drink. The naked who were clothed. The sick and the prisoners who were visited. Believers have to assume that Jesus saw great “sacredness” (Kilner, p. 315) in the least of these to align himself with them. The scriptures make it abundantly clear how we should view the poor. “...every human being is made in God’s image and should be accorded the rights and dignity appropriate to that status” (Bradley, 2014, p. 345). Bradley continues, “We do not have the power to establish God’s kingdom in its fullness, but our work on earth should be a precursor to the kingdom to come. Absolute poverty degrades and prevents people from fulfilling God’s commands to be fruitful and multiply. We should do whatever we can to help restore them” (Bradley, 2014, p. 345).

Using the holistic approach presented by Creswell is a means to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. “This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges. The larger picture is not necessarily a linear model of cause and effect but rather a model of multiple factors intersecting in different ways...mirrors real life and the ways that events operate in the real world” (Creswell, 2018, p. 182). Homelessness is a complex issue and there are a myriad of problems that need solutions

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

RQ1. What is the City of Redding doing to address the homeless issue?

RQ2. What is the City of Chico doing to address the homeless issue?

RQ3. What are Christian leaders doing to address the issue of homelessness in Redding?

RQ4. What are Christian leaders doing to address the issue of homelessness in Chico?

RQ5. What are homeless advocates doing regarding homelessness in Redding?

RQ6. What are homeless advocates doing regarding homelessness in Chico?

RQ7. Do attitudes regarding the homeless affect policy making?

Research Conclusions, Implications, and Applications

When considering the homeless population, it is important to remember that there are individuals with their own stories about how they became homeless, experiences while being homeless, and stories about whether or not they are having their spiritual needs met. This last point should be of concern to Christians, as the gospel is a saving message, designed to give hope to the hopeless and direction for the lost. This research reveals that the gospel is not readily available to the homeless population, except by faith-based organizations and churches used as settings for shelter. This research revealed that many in the faith-based community suffer from “compassion fatigue”. Psychology Today states, “The understanding that exposure to the trauma of others could put people at risk has long been understood—historian Samuel Moyn has said, “Compassion fatigue is as old as compassion,” but the term was coined by historian Carla Joinson in 1992, and further defined and researched by psychologist Charles Figley, who describes it as ‘a state of exhaustion and dysfunction, biologically, physiologically and emotionally, as a result of prolonged exposure to compassion stress’” (Psychology Today staff, 2023).

This researcher is concerned about attitudes towards the poor and homeless of the nation. It is imperative that believers do not forget their true calling. That is, to help the oppressed and

unloved and to not allow themselves to demonstrate “love that has waxed cold” (*KJV*, 1798/2009, Matthew 24:12). The biblical mandate would dictate that the widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor *are* the homeless. The church is called to “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory” (*King James Bible*, 1798/2003, 1 Peter 5:2-4).

There are about four or five small ministries emerging, particularly in Redding, and are operating out of refurbished motels in the city, offering rehabilitation services to the homeless, such as A New Life Discovery (Carroll, April 25, 2023). More churches need to step up and become more involved in this issue and the gospel message of hope should be offered as part and parcel of ministry program offerings. It should be noted that some of these new ministries have emerged from Bethel Church in Redding since 2020 government funding has been available for all types of assistance for counties and cities to address their own homeless issues. This researcher’s hope is that these efforts won’t be stilled when the money has been used up.

This study was based on the ideologies and beliefs of individuals to determine the feelings and thoughts of those who assist the homeless population, including secular and Christian advocates and government officials. Christian pastors, both street, former and present, were questioned regarding their beliefs about church activities regarding helping the homeless.

In this particular study, a small, handpicked group of individuals was targeted by the researcher to glean attitudes and ideas regarding possible solutions to the homeless problem in these two respective cities. The phenomena may not necessarily apply to a larger set of participants. Faith was a common subject, even with non-believers in this project, however,

caring for homeless individuals is not primarily a Christian activity, and the researcher was struck by the caring compassion every single interviewee demonstrated regarding feeling a duty and obligation to assist those who are downtrodden and feel oppressed by the system and by other people.

Taking researcher bias into consideration and to ensure reflective thinking by the researcher, the researcher wrote notes regarding personal experiences, “observations about the process of data collection, and concerns about reactions of participants to the research process” (Creswell, 2015, p. 184). “Sufficient reflexivity occurs when researchers record notes during the process of research, reflect on their own personal experiences, and consider how their personal experiences may shape their interpretation of results,” (Creswell, 2015, p. 184).

Summary Research Conclusions, Implications and Applications

This research has demonstrated that homelessness is a growing and difficult problem in the United States, and here in California, some attempts are being made to alleviate the issue. As the thematic information reveals, there is a lack of affordable housing, a lack of enough drug addiction and mental health services available. Until recently there wasn't much cities or counties could do, except to manage encampments and to use law enforcement as a tool to manage homeless people. There appears to be some light at the end of the tunnel, however, as HUD funds become state funds that are in turn, trickled down to cities like Redding and Chico, to find transitional and hopefully, eventual permanent housing for people.

As Christians, the most disturbing revelation of this research project is the lack of local church involvement in either offering services, standing up for the homeless such as at city and county meetings where homelessness is an agenda issue. Offering services such as shelter, clothing, food, or other assistance is scant by local churches in both cities. There are many

ministries, however, who do the lion's share of work and suffer from compassion fatigue, as they shoulder the work. All pastors interviewed here expressed a desire to have congregants more involved in the care of the homeless. The church seems removed from the problem as a whole in these two locales and this is reflected back by the information in the poll offered as the catalyst for this project (Zauzmer, 2017, para. 1).

Now that interviews have been transcribed, this researcher believes that organizations or groups that assist the homeless may find the information useful for their activities and city officials may find the information of some value when it comes to implementing policies related to the homeless.

Sensing states, "Fundamentally, the possibility of applying findings across settings is established through thickly detailed descriptions that enable audiences to identify similarities of the research setting with other contexts. If you put it another way, this will assist other readers to "see themselves and/or their situation" in the study and Swinton and Mowatt (2016, p. 47) call this recognition of shared experiences "identification" and "resonance" (Sensing, 2011, p. 215).

The researcher was explicit in keeping encompassing field and observational notes that recorded step by step how the research was conducted. This researcher hopes to inspire people to use this phenomenological research study to discover their own community's efforts to house the unhoused.

Most of all, the researcher would hope that church leaders will use the information to build relationships with the homeless in their areas, and to offer the gospel message to those who need it the most.

Bouma-Petiger states, "Christian sojourners are people of the Book. Their lives are shaped by the stories from the Bible and its grand Story – from the joyous homemaking of the

Creator to the costly homemaking of Jesus to the glorious homecoming of God, the great reconciler and recycler...we are people of memory. We remember the grand story and all the little stories that are part of it, the sad stories as well as the happy stories...as Elie Wisel reminds us, the great temptation is to forget” (Bouma-Petiger, 2008, p. 297). Christians must not forget that they, themselves, are homeless, until we are with God, yet God in his goodness, has given humanity the whole world to steward and to have as a home.

Further Research

The researcher believes that there is absolutely room for further research. A return to determining attitudes after the influx of HUD and state funds to address the issue can surely be warranted. Will programs remain after funds dry up? Will these transitional housing projects find permanent housing easily for homeless persons? Determining the effectiveness of programs implemented and whether or not much has been accomplished due to addressing the issue in many locales is also recommended. Determining the exact theological reasonings for a lack of concern as well as a lack of activities that could be activated by the churches is telling. More participation by congregations may ease some of the compassion fatigue care providers suffer as the problems of feeling and caring for the homeless is taken on by other faith-based organizations.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this phenomenological research study was to determine attitudes towards the homeless by policy makers, advocates, and clergy. As homelessness is on the rise in the nation and in Redding, California, this study determined how people who assist the homeless feel about the homeless. This qualitative research method using a phenomenological approach was appropriate for this study. Phenomenological analysis was conducted to focus on the essence of

the phenomenon of homelessness. By focusing on the similarly populated neighboring city of Chico, California, a comparison was drawn regarding programs and projects that assist the homeless. In order to ascertain attitudes about homelessness, the researcher conducted eleven interviews with two governmental representatives from Chico and one from Redding, two homeless advocates from each city and two pastors from each city. Using a phenomenological approach, the researcher was successful and gathered data that displayed deep feelings or beliefs about the homeless. What the researcher found was a cry for more resources and for more intervention by churches and cities is required to put a dent in this problem that is growing in America.

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised” (*KJV*, 1798/2003, Luke 4:18).

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APPENDIX A: LETTER TO PARTICIPANT

Ethel D. McKay
Doctoral Candidate
Liberty University
1971 University Blvd
Lynchburg, VA 24515

Dear Participant:

As a graduate student in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree. The title of my research project is A Phenomenological study in attitudes and belief about the Northern California Homeless Population, and the purpose of my research is to understand the attitudes and beliefs about the homeless as seen by governmental officials, pastors and advocates in Redding and Chico, California.

I am writing to invite you to participate in this study. As government employee/pastor/advocate, your input is requested in this important research.


The interview will last no longer than one hour and will be audio recorded.

Participants will be presented with consent forms to be signed assuring participants of confidentiality. No real names will be used. Pseudonyms will be assigned to each participant.

Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time.

To ensure the collection of accurate data, please do not share the topic and purpose of the research with anyone.

Thank you for considering my request. If you choose to participate, respond by email to


Sincerely,
Ethel McKay
Doctoral Candidate, Liberty University

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

A phenomenological study in attitudes and belief about the Northern California homeless population

Ethel McKay
Liberty University
School of Divinity

You are invited to be in a research study on the experiences of people who are involved in homeless issues. You have been selected due to your position as a governmental official/pastor or advocate in the homeless community. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Ethel McKay, a doctoral candidate in the School of Divinity at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to ascertain real attitudes and feelings about the homeless population.

Procedures: If you agree to be in the study, I will ask you to

1. Participate in an individual interview. The interview will last no longer than one and a half hours and will be audio recorded.

Risks: The risks involved in this study are minimal, which means they are equal to the risks you would encounter in everyday life.

Benefits: Your participation in this study may result in a better understanding of the homeless issue from the perspective of those who are also affected by it.

Benefits to society include knowledge that may help church officials develop strategies within the church and politicians develop policies in government, that will create better policies that will enhance services for this vulnerable population. Advocates for the homeless will benefit from this study as attitudes and beliefs are explored.

Confidentiality: The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify any participant.

Research records will be stored securely, and only the researcher will have access to the records.

- I will conduct the interviews over the phone, by Skype, or in the participant's church, or governmental office, or shelter for the homeless or another space deemed comfortable for participants. Participants will have a multitude of options to create a space where speaking freely about their experiences is a pleasant experience.

- Data will be stored on a password locked computer and may be used in future presentations. After three years, all electronic records will be deleted.

- Interviews will be recorded and transcribed. Recordings will be stored on a password locked computer for the duration of the study and will then be erased. Only the researcher will have access to these recordings.

Voluntary Nature of the Study: Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect any current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide not to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time.

How to Withdraw from the Study: If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact me at the email address/phone number included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Ethel McKay. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact me at [REDACTED]. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. William Higley, at [REDACTED].

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than me or my faculty advisor, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Green Hall 1887, Lynchburg, VA 24515, or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information for your records.

Statement of Consent: I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

(NOTE: DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE UNLESS IRB APPROVAL INFORMATION WITH CURRENT DATES HAS BEEN ADDED TO THIS DOCUMENT.)

The researcher has my permission to audio-record my participation in this study.

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

APPENDIX C: HOMELESS ADVOCATES INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your position?
2. What do you think is the main reason for homelessness in the United States?
3. What do you think is the main reason for homelessness in Shasta or Butte County?
4. What do you think is the main reason for homelessness in Redding or Chico?
5. Can you tell me how many people were counted as homeless in Shasta County in the 2021 PIT count?
6. What is the city/county doing to assist with this issue?
7. What can be done by other entities in the city/county in your opinion?
8. Do you have any personal experience with homelessness?
9. What is your overall view or opinion about the homeless population as a whole?
10. Do you believe people create their own situations of homelessness?
11. Do you believe that attitudes towards the homeless affect policy making?

APPENDIX D: GOVERNMENT OFFICIAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your position?
2. What do you think is the main reason for homelessness in the United States?
3. What do you think is the main reason for homelessness in Shasta or Butte County?
4. What do you think is the main reason for homelessness in Redding or Chico?
5. Can you tell me how many people were counted as homeless in Shasta County in the 2021 PIT count?
6. What is the city/county doing to assist with this issue?
7. What can be done by other entities in the city/county in your opinion?
8. Do you have any personal experience with homelessness?
9. What is your overall view or opinion about the homeless population as a whole?
10. Do you believe people create their own situations of homelessness?
11. Do you believe that attitudes towards the homeless affect policy making?

APPENDIX E: PASTOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is your position?
2. What do you think is the main reason for homelessness in the United States?
3. What do you think is the main reason for homelessness in Shasta or Butte County?
4. What do you think is the main reason for homelessness in Redding or Chico?
5. Can you tell me how many people were counted as homeless in Shasta County in the 2021 PIT count?
6. What is the city/county doing to assist with this issue?
7. What can be done by other entities in the city/county in your opinion?
8. Do you have any personal experience with homelessness?
9. What is your overall view or opinion about the homeless population as a whole?
10. Do you believe people create their own situations of homelessness?
11. Do you believe that attitudes towards the homeless affect policy making?
12. Do you believe the homeless population is receiving the gospel message? If so, in what manner do you think this is occurring? If not, how can this be further facilitated?

APPENDIX F: COMMUNITY LISTENING SURVEY

Community Listening Sessions on the Topic of Homelessness

Summary Report to ICC

January 8, 2020

Purpose: Gather qualitative responses to understand real perceptions of the general public related to the issue of homelessness in our community.

Task: Develop a standardized set of questions to conduct listening sessions with small groups of people across various arenas in our community.

Target Groups:

- Evangelical Pastors (Pastors of various sized evangelical churches)
- Business Leaders (Cross section of business types, sizes, and locations)
- First Responders (PD, EMTs, FD, Sheriff's Department)
- Homeowners
- Realtors (Various offices connected to Board of Realtors)

Procedure: Provide a brief introduction about the purpose of the listening sessions. Ask each group the standardized questions without any clarification on the part of the session conductor.

Record all responses without names attached to encourage honest and unfiltered feedback.

Themes / Observations / Patterns

1. The homeless population is complex. There seems to be a general understanding that this is a highly complex issue. Most everyone recognizes that this group of people represents an extreme amount of diversity of problems (drug use/abuse, mental illness, some who choose this lifestyle, complicated life circumstances, etc.).
2. The root causes are complex. Most people understand the root causes are very complicated that lead to the various types of homeless people. However, there is a perception that the following are the primary reasons people end up as homeless in our community: choice, changes in regulations (AB109, etc.), access to services, and our climate.
3. Lack of affordable housing. A smaller segment of the general population realizes that a lack of affordable housing is a major contributor to the overall homeless situation, but that is a definite minority group who has that understanding.
4. The complexity of solutions. Since almost everyone recognizes there is a complexity related to root causes, there is a natural understanding that the solutions also need to be complex, realizing that no one solution will fix all of it.
5. Mixed perception of available resources. There was a very split perception related to available resources in our community. About half of all people felt like there were plenty of resources for people, and the other half perceived there were inadequate resources available. However, everyone felt like the resources we do have are under-utilized and certainly not known by many people in our community.
6. Better enforcement is an absolute necessity. Even though there is a general recognition that homelessness is complex, there also appears to be a general understanding that the homeless people who are causing the most problems are actually a small minority of the overall homeless population. However, there is a strong belief that these are the people

who can only be helped with some type of incarceration or enforcement as a minimum first step. These feelings are coupled with a belief that this same homeless minority are the primary source of community frustration and discontent and this is the problem that must be addressed first.

7. Lack of coordinated assistance. Even though people's perceptions of the amount and type of resources available in our community varied, there was a general perception that those efforts are not being coordinated well, if at all. They think everyone is doing their own thing, so if people wanted to help they wouldn't know where to begin.

8. Compassion fatigue and lack of compassion. The majority of people in our community are generous and want to help but feel like any previous efforts to assist haven't really made a difference. Those feelings are combined with the perception that many homeless don't want to actually get help, which, when factored into the belief of a lack of coordination, means they don't know how to find help even if they wanted to. However, there is a small segment of our community that appears to be so tired of the problem they have lost all compassion, perhaps even feeling hostile toward the homeless community. This type of person simply wants the problem to go away.

Conclusions

After listening to everyone in these various groups, I am convinced there is an opportunity to create some forward momentum to significantly address the homeless situation in our community. However, that will require some type of simple, unified plan which must be coordinated and championed by multiple segments of our community. Recognizing that the COC has already been working to create a comprehensive plan, I believe steps could be taken for greater partnership to simplify and adopt a local plan that incorporates a multi-layer approach that recognizes and celebrates the resources available in our community, and that demonstrates how those layers would work in concert with one another. That plan could then be used to create a simple communication strategy for gaining community-wide buy-in.

Perhaps something like the following:

Enforcement: Utilizing and supporting initiatives that allow law enforcement agencies to create steps of accountability for people

Enforcement Housing: Utilizing and supporting initiatives that work to move people into permanent housing

Housing Assistance

Assistance: Utilizing and supporting initiatives that address people's underlying root issues in a way that produces wholeness in their lives

Session Overview

Evangelical Pastors' Session

Friday, Oct. 25, 2019

- 7 pastors of various sized churches represented
- 4 congregations

Business Leaders' Session

Monday, Nov. 4, 2019

- 8 individuals of various sized businesses
- Multiple industries spread throughout the area

First Responders' Session

Wednesday, Nov. 20, 2019

- 3 PD
- 2 EMT
- 2 FD
- 1 Sheriff Deputy

Homeowners' Session

Thursday, Nov. 21, 2019

- 4 Garden Tract residents
- 3 Wildwood residents
- 2 Parkview residents

Realtors' Session

Friday, Dec. 20, 2019

- 13 Realtors

A brief overview was given at the beginning of each session using the following outline: These questions are designed to understand and gain insight into the perceptions of the community regarding homelessness in our community. Various target groups will be identified and gathered to listen and understand their unique perspective on this topic (i.e. faith-based, business, healthcare, education, etc.). Using these standardized questions with each listening group will provide a comparative baseline from which to proceed with education and collaborative projects working toward solutions. The attempt will be to gather raw and honest responses in an anonymous way, without commentary or influence from the facilitator.

Raw Data Responses

1. Who do you think the homeless are in our community?

Evangelical Responses

- Multiple types - sleep on our property
- veterans, drug addicts, released prisoners, people in need of shelter, foster kids, a whole group of people who are wanting to be hidden, mentally ill, person/family one or two paychecks away from being homeless, women leaving abusive situations
- 45% are mentally ill, 50% are drug/alcohol abusers

Business Responses

- Drug related - abusers
- Mental health challenges - in combination with substance abuse
- People caught in cycle of poverty: brokenness, abuse, etc.
- Some of them are polite, just temporally displaced due to various reasons
- Very mixed and complex group of people
- Believe there is a misconception of who they are - lack of understanding the distinctiveness between types of homeless by the general community

First Responder Responses

- Transients
- That is a very wide spectrum - when most people use that term that usually doesn't cover the mom & kids or the fire evacuees
- People who want to be there - the professionals - people whose lifestyles about them choosing to be homeless
- The people who are often looked down on by society
- What most people think of with that term is "they are a victim" but the reality is, they are not victims

- There is a real struggle with this term, because it really needs to be broken down into categories
- People who want to get help vs those who choose that lifestyle
- There are really 3 groups: Homeless (people who want help - mostly local), Transients (about 1% of the homeless - the people who cause most of the problems, and most of them are not from here), vagabonds (people who are not a problem, but choose that kind of hobo lifestyle - mostly people moving through our area)
- 19% of all fires in Redding are caused by homeless, but that's primarily those from the category of "transients"
- First responders spend a of time responding to calls for a "person down" on corner, which most of the time turns out to just be someone sleeping
- Some of the homeless individuals are those who been displaced by bad luck and have no other options. Some are the mentally ill. Then there are the criminal element.

Resident Responses

- Mentally ill, Vets, drug addicted
- Mixture - those who are older and financially struggling, but also the drug addicts who aren't in prison but should be
- People who used to be homeowners but who hit hard times and didn't have any family or other support network
- The disabled with financial struggles who don't have a support network
- Younger people with complex issues who are from outside of our community, but they have a lack of vision for their lives
- People who are a result of AB109 changes who haven't been able to integrate back into the community
- Unskilled workers
- Young people who are runaways or who have aged-out of foster care system
- Uneducated and illiterate - either by choice or circumstance
- In comparison to the overall population of our community, there is a higher percentage of people from minority groups
- Those who have been experiencing financial hardship circumstances

Realtor Responses

- Drug addicts is a better description than homeless
- Homeless is too general of a term - addicts/mentally ill/veterans/families down on luck
- Druggies
- People who chose it
- Mentally ill
- Mentally ill and drug use are connected together
- People who come here for the use of our resources. Some of them who are just down on their luck - but those aren't the ones that are visible in our community
- Some of them are situational - some type of relationship issue that has created it
- Some of them are people who have come out of the mission who have gone through programs but can't get a leg up
- Some are the "world-travelers" here in the summer

2. Do you feel like the homeless situation in our community is getting better or worse, and why?

Evangelical Responses

- getting better (fewer homeless) - because their hiding places are gone, and because Fire resources are gone (since people came here after the fire to try and get access to those resources, and now that the resources are gone, so are those homeless)
- getting worse - increase in visitations on our property - think they are just moving from place to place
- getting worse - they are becoming more emboldened and not taking advantage of services being offered
- About the same - Home Depot area as an example
- Worse - because of drug issues - legalization of drugs has made the problem worse - it's only going to continue to get worse because of the drug issues
- 25-50% are people who are not employable because they can't pass drug tests (mostly due to marijuana) - then flagged as unemployable with temp agencies - especially those who are 16-25 years old

Business Responses

- Worse because I have become more apathetic or callous to it. Have a high degree of feeling frustration that change isn't happening in this area in our community
- About the same but the problem is spreading out - people moving wider out into our community. Illustration - person pushing cart up quartz hill road the other day
- Moving around more and more, but not really increasing in numbers
- Can see the weeks when PD is focused in various places, which creates an up and down feeling to it. For example, can tell when PD is doing a push in downtown area vs when they are doing a push in area by river
- The prisoner release program from a few years ago increased the population, but that has stabilized in the past few years
- The Homeless population is more distributed and mobile now - not as many permanent camps visible as their used to be
- I am no longer giving out money the way I used to and that's because it feels like the homeless are more aggressive, so it feels worse to me.

First Responder Responses

- Worse (almost unanimous)
- It's the status quo. Hasn't gotten worse or improved.
- Displacement by two fires has been significant on the category of "Homeless" but those people are easy to help
- Four factors that created the perfect storm and have made this worse
- Prop 47 - was billed as a "safe neighborhood & schools act" but it was actually changing the qualification of categories
- Prop 57 - non-violent offenders got out of prison and were then supposed to be supervised by probation
- AB109
- Opioid epidemic growing
- These four factors created the perfect storm for rampant substance abuse issues, mixed with mental health issues, that also helped create the criminal

element that has contributed so much to the “Transients” group

- Someone raised the rumor they have heard that Shasta County has become a dumping ground for people from out of the area, including criminals, but that was quickly corrected around the table, affirming that it is just a rumor and not really true

Resident Responses

- Very bad, but it’s not continuing to get worse in the past 3-4 years
- Feels worse but wonder if that has more to do with a perception because there is a lot more shifting of the homeless happening
- Got worse after 2008-09, then again after AB109, but not really since then
- Not sure about actual numbers - but they are much more visible now. There are a lot more fences and sectioning off of areas of the city, which pushes them into more visible areas, and the increase in crime sweeps also contributes to this.
- Perception of it being worse, but that’s because it seems more concentrated
- Seems more visible, but our specific neighborhood (Garden Tract) feels more safe in last 5 years

Realtor Responses

- Getting worse, but it’s more of a feeling than an actuality
- Greatly depends on time of year - Winter season creates more opportunities for conflict with people in real estate market due to people trying to get out of weather
- Worse - legislative circumstances like AB109, etc., have greatly contributed to it
- Certainly not getting better
- Getting better if you actually look at the numbers like in the Point in Time Count
- It feels like it’s getting worse - feels much more visible
- Staying the same
- Doesn’t feel safe at various places around the city

3. What do you think are the major root causes of homelessness in our community?

Evangelical Responses

- drug addiction (primarily meth & heroine)
- breakdown of relationships - bridges with family support networks have been burned
- Dumping ground for prisoners - High Desert comes and drops people off here all the time
- Mental health issues - very high percentage - not a very good system in Shasta County to address this issue - ERs are overwhelmed
- Mental illness are tough issues especially with medications - in the church in particular, because these people can’t be helped with just counselors, but need doctors to prescribe
- Segment of them who are wanting to be homeless due to a general lack of accountability and ambition

Business Responses

- They stay here because of the high amount of resources available
- The opposite view was also expressed that there is a lack of resources in our community
- The homeless come and stay because of the significant faith community presence here. That creates more generosity which might contribute to more homeless. Not necessarily a bad thing for there to be a large faith community here.

- Mental illness & drug addiction
- The lack of enforcement and regulations in our area/state creates more of an opportunity for them to be here
- Our cost of living - it's lower here than in other places, so people come thinking they can live better here, only to find they can't
- For some of the homeless (a certain percentage), it's just the way they chose to live.
- Our nice climate here - one of the places where the most sunny days in a year

First Responder Responses

- Mental Health & drug abuse in combination are a vicious cycle together
- Lifestyle - those who choose this life - this is mainly the "transient" group
- Lack of mental health facilities where a person can be "housed"
- Prop 47, Prop 57 & AB109
- There was a real concern about a lack of a more long-term, mental health facility for people to stay who really need that help. To that point someone added that for the past several years there has been a lack of funding for mental health assistance from the Federal government all the way down to the States, counties and cities
- Lack of housing.
- Some people are using their homelessness status to their advantage.

Resident Responses

- Economic issues
- Income inequality & high cost of living
- Drugs
- Mental illness
- Lack of low-income housing
- Increasing rental values
- Choice - but a small percentage
- CA Housing shortage - highest impact here is on those who are on the financial bubble
- Chronic life choices and cycles
- Domestic Violence
- Family systems breaking down
- Cutback in mental health facilities, like the closing of our county hospital

Realtor Responses

- Mental health facilities closing several years ago was a big impact
- Drug addiction and mental illness works together - created a switch from just homeless people to people with significant issues related to addiction
- Drugs
- Too many services
- Climate
- Lack of affordable housing is such a big problem
- Too many handouts that keep people in their circumstances
- We have a very generous community, with groups like Bethel that throw lots of money out there - brings people here for that
- Catastrophic loss of family support/relationships
- Breakdown of family unit
- Pride - don't want to tell others they are in difficult circumstances

- Too much decay in family units
- Lack of affordable housing, but these aren't the ones who are causing trouble

4. How do you think our community homeless population compares to other communities in Northern California?

Evangelical Responses

- One person recently spent time in Sacramento - feels the same here as there - unsafe
- Homeless are drawn to lots of resources here - told to come to Shasta County because we are very generous here
- There is a network that exists between homeless where they communicate with each other about where the resources are
- This is a central location where people get dumped
- Also an area where there is a high resource of supply of illegal drugs
- We are the main community north of Sacramento, so this would naturally be hub for homeless
- Since we are a smaller community, we don't compare to larger cities, so not as bad as that, but in comparison to other small communities, our situation is worse
- If there isn't enforcement, then it welcomes them more (Rocklin (police immediately arrested them and took them out of their city) vs Roseville (let them be) as example

Business Responses

- We are the only major hub in the far northern part of the state where East/West & North/South highways converge - naturally tend to come here.
- We have great medical facilities (better ones) here in comparison to other communities North of Sacramento
- Having lived in Folsom for 10 years I encountered the aggressive action by their police - picking homeless up and giving them no choice - either get dropped off at this agency in town or be taken downtown to Sacramento. PD is much less aggressive here.
- Red Bluff is experiencing the same situation we are, just on a smaller scale, so the only difference between us and Red Bluff is volume, but the issues are all the same.

First Responder Responses

- Mostly we are similar other communities out size.
- Eureka might be a little worse, but we are about the same as the neighboring city
- Think it is moderate compared to other surrounding counties and areas.

Resident Responses

- Maybe trying programs like they are doing in Seattle
- Our police try to enforce ordinances, where they might not in other communities
- There is not a collective set of helping steps for people along the way
- County Seats like ours (or Grand Valley, etc.) always seem to be more attractive to the homeless because of the services available
- Services that are offered here tend to collect more people here (example: mission)

Realtor Responses

- Not any enforcement or ability to enforce anything in our community - makes it worse
- There are more homeless here than in Red Bluff, Anderson, Cottonwood
- The homeless go where services are - which is here, so there are more here

- The homeless don't tend to go further North because it's too cold, but Mt Shasta is pretty bad

5. What makes our community situation different than those other communities?

Evangelical Responses

- 3 Hospitals in our community - that creates access to healthcare, so there is a steady stream of homeless in our ERs - medical access
- We have a community culture/temperature of wanting to help - some cities where if you come in they will ship you to somewhere else. We are more compassionate as a community as a whole - people don't know what to do with them, but at least they will try and be kind
- Significant lack of education of the community in general around these issues
- Having a casino in our community is a big deal - there is lots of illegal activity that happens there at the casino, so it becomes a fallback point for the homeless and illegal activity to gather. That same thing is true with Walmart on the East side of town - it's also a fallback point
- One of the problems is, If you concentrate resources or places for them to stay - that is a very bad situation because it draws them all together, and then they feed off of each other
- Our community is a drop off point for prison release
- Significant lack of mental health services, which should be mandated by the courts for chronic homeless cases

Business Responses

- We have to deal with the prison population here because of being county seat - families visiting, etc., and that includes the other places people are being housed for criminal activity
- Not really that much different.

First Responder Responses

- Lack of jail space is a big contributor. The word is out that if a person gets arrested in our community, it is just an inconvenience, but not a real deterrent in any way
- This is a very compassionate community with things the mission, there are lots of people who want to help
- County seat is another one of the things that brings folks in for services
- It's different because it is our community.
- The areas around City Park and City Hall are like scenes from a movie - not normal.

Resident Responses

- We have 61.2 square miles with lots of water and open space, plus we are the county seat, so lots of good places to go, which makes it more attractive to homeless
- Historically we have a higher incarceration rate compared to other counties in CA, and that creates more people who are out of prison, etc.
- The climate makes it possible for the homeless to live outside for at least 9 months of year (excluding the reprieve from the homeless in Dec, Jan, & Feb). There seems to always be a visual increase in the homeless in March & April every year
- We are the largest community between Sacramento and Southern OR

- We are on a ring of sex-trading that passes through our region
- The city is currently lacking in a strong economic center (it used to be forestry), which is a contributing factor to the overall impact. Currently it seems like the hospitals are our largest economic drivers, which might not create the same opportunities for a growing economy as we used to have.
- Very high percentage of ACES in our community, which makes a significant impact
- Changes in the criminal justice system in CA have had a major impact that make us different than other communities outside of CA

Realtor Responses

- Feels like the homeless are “winning” here, which is causing a disruption in our quality of life (businesses closing, cars being broken into, etc.)
 - Our community is very generous which has an impact on them coming here rather than other surrounding communities
 - Our climate and nature make our area more appealing
 - We have lots of services
 - There is a lack of enforcement here in our community. For example, in a smaller communities like ours but in another area, they started giving tickets to people who were giving money to people on side of road and that made a significant difference in their homeless population.
6. What kind of personal encounters have you had with the homeless in our community?

Evangelical Responses

- Good, bad, ugly
- Everyday encounters at churches with people coming to ask for assistance
- Some churches have had to start nightly patrols on their campuses
- If you offer them assistance, then after a while the homeless get an entitlement mentality
- Finding lots of needles on campuses
- One individual used to personally carry bags of items in their care to give out to homeless (some clothes, toiletries, food, etc.), but 80% of people didn't want bag, just wanted money; mostly quit stopping to even engage
- Personal encounters reinforced the idea that most of them just want money, not help
- Illustration of Portland that went to a voucher system as a city instead of giving out money to people
- Few churches engaged in street ministry - go out into the community with sandwiches, but that created conflict with police. The churches were trying to build relationships with people, but PD felt like it was enabling the problem - so eventually they just stopped. Now that church targets their gifts to known entities like the mission or other compassionate ministries. They have a very strong concern of building an adversarial relationship with police
- Volunteer at mission and have encountered both kind and sweet individuals, and mean and aggressive individuals

Business Responses

- Business owner working on a downtown project they assumed they would be encountering the homeless. They have, but worse than they anticipated - people are vandalizing buildings, defecating on their property, etc. When they have

confrontation with them it's been very difficult, and they have had to call police for trespassing several times.

- Very similar experiences as the person above - vandalizing, defecation on property, trespassing, mental illness issues, etc.
- Need for greater cleaning resources related to camping, etc.
- Also had personal encounters that are respectful, personable - people just looking for place to find some shelter

First Responder Responses

- Nothing Good
- All negative
- Yes (meaning volumes of them)
- Because of our work, we know all of the homeless (transients) by name
- Encountering them through work.

Resident Responses

- Stolen property (can't directly attribute it to the homeless but seems extremely likely)
- We walk downtown all the time and we've never been threatened or treated poorly. We don't always directly engage with the homeless, but we've never had a difficult experience with them downtown. However, we also don't do things like walk right through the middle of City Park.
- When I initiate in a friendly encounter, that's what I get in response
- Several regular encounters at library and they have always been very polite
- Car broken into, but not sure that was homeless? Might have been young people who are unsupervised
- Very positive walking downtown - don't feel like it's unsafe
- Less than positive with people living homeless in our neighborhood for several years - depending on mental condition of day, could be good or bad - so it depends on mental situation and drug usage from day to day
- People rummaging in trash cans - people asking for money - people walking through property
- People stealing mail
- Don't usually see the homeless making messes, but if I ever ask them to clean up after themselves or to help clean an area up, I never get any cooperation from them.
- Seems like there is a lot of trash left behind at lots of places

Realtor Responses

- Squatters/addicts in buildings trying to sell
- Out with family and encountered man downtown with pants pulled down masturbating
- Been yelled at for not responding to people with signs along side of road
- Both good and bad - depending on the type of homeless person
- Had to call police for interactions near offices
- Try to personally avoid it - try to not go out after dark because I don't feel safe, especially in downtown area
- Very cautious on river trail
- Had to have them hauled off of property, both offices but also property for sale
- Have given some people rides if they are people that feel safe to me

- Tried to provide some help when and where possible

7. How do those encounters impact your thoughts and feelings about the homeless in general?

Evangelical Responses

- It's complicated! So much diversity of problems to be addressed
- Those personal encounters create cynicism - start looking for lies to catch them in when they come to their churches for assistance
- When the homeless act as if they don't want any help except for money, causes us to just stop offering them help - perception is they don't want help and therefore offering them help won't do anything
- If people want to get help they can, but if they don't, they won't - so if we help when they don't want to change, then we are just enabling them
- Lots of people don't want to take advantage of the resources in our community
- 95% of people when the mission is mentioned they don't want to have anything to do with that. That response by the homeless then creates cynicism on our part
- Sometimes have a hard time thinking about them as "people" vs "just homeless"
- We feel like we are between a rock & hard place - between cynicism and the hard difficulty of actually helping because it's so complicated, especially with Mental Illness
- Mobile Crisis Van helpful, but these issues will take years for change - tough to invest in helping the homeless (especially the mentally ill or drug addicted) when you are trying to offer help to the people who are somewhat healthy in our own churches

Business Responses

- Several people who have downtown businesses specifically chose to be in the downtown area to want to help this community, however, over time their compassion level has greatly diminished because of the difficulty in their encounters with this population. They don't really want to help anymore because it's only problems - the people they encounter do not really want any help
- Empathy level has been reduced - even in this past year. Illustration - used to pass out water, don't even do that anymore because of the disrespect and fear they feel from their encounters with people
- Diminished empathy due to what appears to be an increased level of aggression - mainly due to the business owners own diminished level of compassion. Complicated mix of more difficult encounters diminishes personal desire to engage, which then cycles back to less empathy and compassion.
- Interested in helping civically, but feel a struggle personally with being compassionate
- Much more guarded when approaching than used to be in the past
- Perception that the population they are encountering is much more mobile here, and that group is also more aggressive, so they engage in ways that are much more cautious.
- Feel like they are encountering a level of drug/mental health issues, that has made them feel more fearful
- They understand a clear difference between the "types" of homeless people they

are encountering, and it feels like they are encountering the aggressive types more

- Police are challenged in different ways right now - they have much more difficult issues to deal with, so it makes it more difficult to directly address this issue with the police

- Curious if the legalization of certain types of drugs is contributing to this issue in general

First Responder Responses

- I try to have compassion, but it's hard when they don't accept it help

- I wouldn't live here if I didn't have a good job here.

- Recently with my 4-year-old child, they saw a person at a gas station and said, "Look dad, there's a tweaker." Don't know where they learned that, but was

shocked that at 4 years old they had some kind of a recognition.

- We are a very compassionate community in general, but my feelings and I believe the community feeling in general is changing. There is a lot more frustration than there used to be.

- Example - There is a group of ladies who bring sack lunches to library on a regular basis. They recently had something stolen out of their car right while they were there trying to help and offer the homeless these lunches.

- Another major concern that there is NO conception by public of the massive environmental impact of homelessness in our community. All the trash, defecating, etc. is really making a much bigger impact than most people realize.

- Really feel for the children who are the real victims of homelessness.

Resident Responses

- There is help is available for them, so they either need to seek it out or go somewhere else

- Feel like they don't care about the social norms that are a part of society

- Feel like our rights as homeowners are being eroded. I'm tired of feeling taken advantage of, feel like those of us who are pulling our weight and are playing by the rules are having to take responsibility for those who aren't/can't

- My encounters tend to cause me to put the homeless into categories, to group them all together and not really see the nuance of individual situations

- Seems like only 10% of homeless are the visible ones and the ones who are engaging in the majority of bad behavior, causing a negative perception on the whole issue

Realtor Responses

- Impacted the way we have approached vacant houses

- Got my CCW for protection, but that isn't because of a fear of "homeless," rather it's a fear of the person who is addicted/mentally ill

- Don't really want to help anymore

- We've made it too easy to be homeless - there is no personal responsibility for them

- It is difficult to determine who is who - which type of homeless person you are possibly encountering (addict, mentally, ill, someone down on luck, etc.)

- Makes me want to help more

- I don't want to help if they don't want to be helped

- Trying not to be jaded, but it's hard to not be jaded

- Makes it difficult to sell homes in some areas of city

8. What do you think are the solutions we need to utilize in order to impact homelessness in our community?

Evangelical Responses

- Difficult because for years there weren't any places trying to address mental health issues in our community
- Nothing in our county to go for mental illness issues - "VA doesn't even have it for veterans"
- Transitional Housing is a great resource, but they are at capacity. "We could use 10 more of those, but there's just a lack of funding."
- There has to be a large change in our culture as a whole. As long as we release prisoners in our community, and we don't have mental health capacities, that change won't happen.
- Sometimes we create our own problems as a community. For example, next door to rescue mission there is a marijuana grow sight. We are shooting ourselves in the foot.
- Marijuana is a gateway drug that leads to so many other things. Now that it's legal it's creating so many other problems. "I have read lots of studies and most people are just totally ignorant about the problems this produces. And city officials are only looking at the bottom line of the money they can get from marijuana."
- 99.9% of victories we have seen have gone through the mission
- The local mental health facility is trying to do good work

Business Responses

- Exploring local ordinance options and then the enforcement of those ordinances
- Often don't call about trespassing with homeless since the police have much bigger issues they need to deal with
- Lack of jail capacity is a major issue/need. There is a lot of catch & release happening in our community with the lack of jail beds, so makes it feel like why even bother calling
- If we pass sales tax and get more police, jail beds, etc., that will have a significant impact on this problem
- A sobering center would increase usage of resources for homeless
- We really need more dedicated mental health facilities
- Going to have to target different solutions to the different types of homeless - drug abuse, mental health, housing, etc.
- Definitely going to need a complexity of solutions
- Need more collaboration between groups, neighborhoods, etc. to increase community communication that brings people together to help establish both standards of operation, but also channeling people toward effective solutions
- Utilize the mission and their programs more
- Seems like there might be a need for police education about all the resources available in our community

First Responder Responses

- More jail space needs to be created so consequences for illegal activity can truly be enforced
- We need drug abuse treatment and mental health assistance in the jail
- The benefit of more jail beds is the gift of time for people who need to get help with

what they really need, like drug programs, mental health assistance, etc.

- Minimum of 90 days in jail would give people the gift of time to connect with the help they needed, but this would only be accomplished by booking them under an ordinance that mandated that kind of time
- There needs to be a combination of time, deterrent, and accountability
- Large variety of groups already wanting to help, but need to help inform the homeless about what services are already available.
- Follow up is also critical. Case management and information exchange between groups is critical to maximize efforts and prevent duplication.

Resident Responses

- Development of affordable housing programs
- Accountability
- Poor will always be with us - somehow we are going to have to take care of them, but trade schools would be a great place to invest (this is where we are behind as a community and as a country) - that would make a difference in the magnitude of our unskilled, untrained young people
- Those who are willing to get help and want to not be homeless - we need a funnel of systems that provide clear direction about what the steps are from beginning to end - with an advocate helper to walk with each person through the process
- Creation of more affordable housing
- Some type of assistance that helps them develop a will to want to be a part of their own solution (examples: mentoring, case-management, friendship, higher power, etc.)
- More programs like the Step-Up program, or the fire camp workgroups
- Programs that develop self-esteem and dignity in people's lives, that attempt to address the severe brokenness in people
- We need to robustly go after the state of CA homelessness money that is available. This is an absolute necessity
- Helping people get a skill because that will give them a purpose

Realtor Responses

- Create various channels of solutions
 - Figure out how to tell individual stories in our community to help restore compassion in people
 - The police chief's model seems like a good start. (Their understanding of that model was to bring the homeless in who are committing crimes and take them to a minimum security facility with an immediate choice - either you get treatment or you go to incarceration.)
 - The revolving door of jail needs to be closed so that people who are addicted have time to start getting free from their addiction in jail, so they can then make a better choice for themselves
 - Creating some kind of purpose in life for the homeless people
 - Possibly creating work camps - some type of system that makes people work to in some way restore their purpose and dignity in their lives
- A. Have you heard any information about a "low-barrier shelter" and do you have any thoughts or ideas about what that is and why some people might think it's necessary?

Evangelical Responses

- In favor of making something available to people who want it, but the vast majority don't want the help
- Would like to see success from an agency or a community in which they have had success before we would just start something like this.
- Desire to embracing programs that already work
- Think the mission is almost basically a low-barrier shelter at this point, but the homeless don't want to use it or take advantage of it because they don't like confinement, or being around other people, or being required to do anything, or simply not wanting to have anything to do with God

Business Responses

- "Navigation Center" - It was a desire to use the money we have to work on a project, but it got shot down, just don't know why exactly
- Heard about an issue related to the court ruling from Idaho thinking it would mean we didn't have a place to send people, but after some investigation by City, it appeared as though the mission does qualify, so we can engage in enforcement
- A navigation center is worth trying to pursue - problem is it's just going to draw more homeless into our community
- Wish the county government would actually take a stand and do something to create a center to deal with the mental health issues. Mental health patients can come into the hospitals for days on end with no real place to send them.
- A case management style assistance program for finding housing and support for people would be helpful.
- A small pilot project for a medical respite center would be a good start, but more things like this are desperately needed
- One of the biggest problems preventing solutions from happening is a lack of coordination of services that already exists. Illustration - people don't know about the recovery sobering center that is available now

First Responder Responses

- Like what's in Provo Utah - community within a community to help house transients?
- Does that mean a tent in a field?
- If it's some kind of tent city or shelter program, there can be real problems that from a fire perspective, especially if there is conflict between which agency is in charge of providing them licensing (State fire standards vs County fire standards for example)

Resident Responses

- Mostly no understanding
- Place where people can come without pre-requisites of issues, but that raises questions about how low the barriers are and what the rules are in a shelter like that
- During the above description by someone, with some discussion by the group, it seemed like there was a little more comfortability with the idea since so many people seem to have barriers related to the mission (religious, "on my 30 days out", pets, etc.)

Realtor Responses

- Not sure what that is - but need a place for people who are non-violent and clean from drugs. There needs to be a place to stay that is separate from the other people who are addicts (rather than a big room with all the homeless people all mixed together)
- What does Low barrier mean?
- I think this means low-accountability - homeless can come and go when they want. If that's what this is, I am not a fan of that
- Is this like a warming shelter?

B. Have you ever heard of the “housing first” model for addressing homelessness in communities, and do you have any thoughts or ideas about what that is and why some people might think it's a solution.

Evangelical Responses

- Not very familiar with it
- Desire a model that includes structure, mentoring, “parenting”, vs just a roof
- Most people just take advantage of the various situations like this and “work the system” without any real change
- Two most significant issues face homeless are mental illness and drug addiction, so whatever solutions we come up with, they must be able to address those root issues
- Housing first is an attempt to create a short-term solution to get the public “off the back” of government, but will that really change anything?
- This idea would be a temporary fix, at best, and would only really work for those people who are homeless due to circumstances beyond their control (medical, physical, etc.

Business Responses

- Some have heard of it and think it's a possible solution for a small population of the homeless, but it wouldn't work for everyone because they aren't ready to actually work on their key issues
- A housing first model wouldn't really work without some type of case management being involved as well

First Responder Responses

- What we already said for 8A?

Resident Responses

- An actual roof over people's heads, like tiny houses
- Did Lloyd Pendleton start this? If they get a roof over their heads, then they can make progress on other things
- There is merit to the idea, but don't know how successful it is
- Not happening currently
- Not really a good solution for all people, or maybe even the best solution for most
- Perhaps there could be some kind of a community village idea
- The NVCSS village (The Woodlands) is such a great thing!

Realtor Responses

- Not heard of that
- Have heard of it, but everywhere I've heard of it, it doesn't work

- If you just give someone something without qualifications, they won't take care of it
 - All the housing first models haven't worked at all
 - Without accountability, none of it will work
9. One of the concerns that seems to be making its way around our community related to this issue is "accountability." What do you think accountability means in this situation?

Evangelical Responses

- Accountability is everything - but a homeless person isn't actually accountable at all already - but as people start to get some hope, then accountability can come in
- Can't ask them to be accountable from day one, but as they want to make change, then you can introduce accountability into their lives
- Caseworkers would be an absolute key - maybe one place to send people - a central location
- People need to be made accountable even if they don't want to be
- Accountability is a great idea, but will only work for those people who want to be held accountable, which is a minority

Business Responses

- If they break the law, they should be held accountability for that. The problem is it's a revolving door in the jail, and sometimes maybe even a possibility for them to get a meal and a place to stay for a night or so.
- Accountability is more related to the issues of criminal activity than anything else
- Accountability in this situation means getting the homeless to agree to abide by societal norms (i.e.. it's not ok to be dirty, not ok to defecate in public, not ok to vandalize, etc.). They don't understand how a person can come to think that kind of behavior is ok, so it's hard to understand how they could be held accountable to that kind of standard.
- A lack of consequences for bad/criminal behavior creates a sliding scale for even maintaining and enforcing accountability
- If they steal something under \$950 at a business there is absolutely no consequences. Illustration - one business owner actually had a person say that directly to them: "This is less than \$950 so there isn't anything you can do about it."
- The changes in laws in recent years have created this sliding scale of accountability
- There is a disconnect between actions and consequences of actions due to a lack of enforcement
- Accountability can also mean attempting to ensure people can stay on their medication for when they are trying to come off drug addiction

First Responder Responses

- There is no recourse or punishment for criminal actions. They know the jail is full, so they will get arrested and will be released.
- There are no consequences for illegal choices
- When it's cold and rainy the homeless will tell EMTs "I want to commit suicide" so the EMTs are forced to take them to the hospital where they will get to stay for 72 hours out of the weather
- Accountability to social norms - there are rules/norms/laws we have developed as a society. We need to be able to enforce those. Example - camping illegal, fire - illegal,

urinating/defecating in public - illegal. If a person violates these norms/laws, they need to be held accountable for that violation

- Some of the difference is related to the means people have access to. There was a distinction made between a person who has money as a resource, compared to a homeless person whose only real resource is time. So time is the only resource that can be used as a tool of accountability with the homeless.
- What does it mean to hold the State accountable for what they did with the changes in laws, like the 3 examples cited earlier (Prop 47, Prop 57 & AB109). First responders are of the ones pointed at as being the segment of our society that has to deal with this issue and find a solution ("the police need to do something"), but the State is the one that created these issues.
- Both the homeless need to be accountable and the providers need to be accountable too. If the homeless are receiving benefits, they need to be able to show they are using them well. And providers need to also know when restraint is necessary - not just continuing to hand out services. Balance in both help and utilization.

Resident Responses

- What it means for all of us
- It's a way to keep track of people and what services they are receiving, what help they still need, etc. They are accountable to our community and our community is accountable to them
- A lack of ability to arrest people since there is a lack of jail space - so not really the means to hold people accountable
- So many people who are addicted are being arrested, but they are simply released and don't have time to attempt to detox and then recover
- Significant lack of healthy relationships in people's lives, so that makes accountability difficult in a person's life - no support network to help them

Realtor Responses

- Great word! There needs to be some kind of step program that helps people move forward in a progressive way (leveling up). That would be a much better system than a system that was just either "you get benefits" or "you get no benefits." Instead, try and create a program where you give people gradual benefits along the way, where effort brings reward, but the steps are attainable.

- Like an effort to better yourself
- Create a system where people are rewarding for having a desire to move forward in some way in their life. For example, maybe we would say a person is at a -10 place in their life, but they want to move to a -8. How could we help and support them in that desire, rather than expecting them to go from a -10 to a 1.
- If they commit crimes, they need to go to jail and then go to work
- Depends on the type of homeless - different situations, create different kinds of accountability needs
- There is only a small percentage of people who actually want to change or get better, so help them, but just lock the rest up

10. How do you think you would be willing to be involved in working toward solutions on this issue in our community?

Evangelical Responses

- Willing to invest in something that is a real solution that is working toward real

change

- Some type of collective church software tracking program? that you would do networking and sharing of information with each other, including other agencies in town
- Some of them struggle with “God’s money” going to government programs, which is a perception from congregants
- In some older congregations - everyone feels a “need” to do something, but if the leadership of the church wanted to actually be a part of helping, they are worried that their congregation members wouldn’t want to have “those people in here” - it’s an us vs them mentality that would require some significant congregational education
- They feel the struggle of dealing with struggling people in the midst of all the demands of their current congregations (if they were to bring some homeless into their church to try and help)
- The homeless need community (support, relationships, etc.) in order to change
- Willing to get behind some type of compelling vision - a vision that would be comprehensive in nature
- Some of them feel that if they were to try and start some new initiatives, there would be a perception by their congregation that “we are already trying to help, so why do we need to do something else?”
- Recognize the need to help change the perception in congregations
- Want to be told what to do to help, but feel like they aren’t being told what to do or how to really help, so they are just trying to do something (small steps), but it’s not really producing systemic change, which is what they would like

Business Responses

- We can help through our everyday business activities as we interact with this community
- This \highlights the deep need for information sharing that helps people know about all of the services are available here
- Someone wondered about whether the statement “we have a lot of services available here” is actually true or not.
- Self-Education by individuals, business education & communication, communitywide education efforts

First Responder Responses

- Not much that we can do unless changes are done at a State level
- Willing to working on whatever local solutions we can come up with, despite any lack of changes at a higher level
- Interested in community partnerships
- Need more police officers on the streets
- It would be great to form a creative think-tank that would bring together multiple agencies, groups in town, etc. to work on community solutions.
- Already some good mitigation work happening, like the cleanups in public spaces. We need more of that, and we would continue to participate in things like that (community cleanups, etc.)
- There needs to be a larger, highly collaborative, community-wide effort
- Would even support taking some kind of smaller, practical step as a community.

Then when that goes well, celebrate it and take the next step as a community.

- Community cleanup.
- Supporting agencies in safety training.

Resident Responses

- We are here!
- The creation of entry level jobs and training
- Have a desire to give opportunities for people
- Educational programs that include a type of reinvestment program (by participating in this program, you also commit to this investment in our community after the program)
- Investing in the two people who regularly live in our neighborhood
- One-size doesn't fit all

Realtor Responses

- Local boards that create community involvement
- Drive the bus to drop them off somewhere else
- Creation of community-first village
- Support efforts that others are working on. Don't want to lead something, but very willing to support efforts being made by others
- Creating opportunities for work with the land, with their hands, building self-esteem and worth
- It is going to be important to publicize the stories of people who have made successful steps