

An Exploratory Study:
Self Identification and Needs Assessment of Two
Distinct Homeless Subpopulations

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Presented on 02 December 2008

Introduction:

Homelessness is a persistent issue in American society today. Some individuals within society find the constraints and responsibilities that are involved in maintaining a housed status too confining or difficult. Others deny the validity of a society structured around consuming material goods to propagate an expanding economy, and choose to remain homeless and traveling as a means of resistance against this social order. While homelessness is a choice for some, systemic and economic issues prevent others from being able to maintain a secure housing situation even when such housing is desired. Whether one's status as homeless stems from a willful desire, or whether one is unable to acquire housing for any of a variety of structural, economic, or other reasons, being homeless creates harms and other negative issues for homeless individuals.

Being unable to obtain, and maintain, a secure housing situation can create several difficulties for homeless individuals. Health issues are likely to arise, or become more pronounced, due to constant exposure to outdoor weather elements. It is difficult to prepare healthy foods, even if one has the economic resources to procure the ingredients. "Furthermore, since homeless people do not have adequate kitchen facilities, it is difficult for them to consume food items that need preparation..." (Levinson and Ross 2007).

When one spends the majority of one's time existing in public places, exposed to others, it is difficult to maintain the privacy and dignity central to one's ability to maintain self esteem and a coherent sense of self. As well, lacking a safe and secure location to go in times of psychological stress can cause the homeless person to exhibit behaviors, in public, that draw attention to their homeless state.

We can view the various issues surrounding homeless individuals as being ideal and material. Those issues that are ideal involve the ability of the homeless individual to maintain a sense of meaning regarding his or her life which promotes a strong sense of self and self-esteem. Those issues that are material relate to the homeless individual's ability to maintain a level of access to material resources sufficient to meet his or her perceived needs. In our research, we look at ideal issues in terms of an assessment of the

self-identification of the homeless individual. We look at the material issues in terms of a needs assessment as stated by homeless individuals themselves.

In this research project we have collected some basic data from a variety of individuals that we can place into one of two groups, which we consider to be subpopulations, within the broader homeless population in the Eureka and Arcata, California areas. The two groups studied are the homeless veterans and the traveling homeless young adults living in, and moving through, the local area. These groups were chosen for study after some preparatory inquiry involving several staff members of local homeless aid agencies. The homeless aid agency staffers find the aforementioned subpopulations, of the overall local homeless populations, particularly interesting and worthy of study. Hence, a pilot study was created in which we attempt to garner information related to the self identification and needs assessments of two distinct homeless subpopulations.

The homeless veterans are a unique group within the local homeless population. Any veteran that has completed his/her military service, and received an honorable discharge, has the right to access a variety of services provided by the federal and state governments. Such services include, but are not limited to, free/reduced cost health care coverage, job training, and assistance with service connected disability claims. Homeless veterans can also take advantage of government sponsored transitional housing opportunities, where such opportunities exist. The local aid agency staffers expressed an interest in learning who these veterans are; That is, the staffers would like to know if the homeless veterans identify themselves as such. We, the researchers, as well as agency staffers, also expressed interest in knowing how the veterans became homeless, and the extent to which they are aware of, and are utilizing, the services specifically available to them in the local area.

Traveling homeless young adults are interesting to the aid agencies for a slightly different reason. A population of these individuals seems always to be present in the local area, and yet by definition these individuals are transient. Therefore the specific composition of the population of traveling homeless young adults is constantly in flux. New individuals move into, and out of, the area much more quickly than do members of other groups within the homeless population. This presents challenges to the aid agencies

that have a limited resource base with which to work. The purpose of these agencies, with respect to homeless individuals, is focused on helping such individuals to become housed, employable, employed and functioning members of society. The homeless traveling young adults seem to be making a decision, of their own volition, to avoid becoming normalized members of the dominant society. In this context there is conflict between the purposive functioning of local aid agencies and a population trying to access these services without any intention of becoming productive permanent members of the local community. Thus the aid agencies want to know who these individuals are, and to what extent they attempt or desire to access local services.

Within the sociological milieu that we prepared our research design, we sought to translate these questions into a form conducive to the collection and analysis of data. So we decided to focus on the concepts of self-identification and needs-assessment. This allowed us to ask a broad array of questions that yielded data fertile for analysis and discussion. Still, the period of our data collection was not all smooth sailing.

We, the researchers, came up against the problem of being untrained qualitative interviewers attempting to maintain the focus of sometimes uninterested, and sometimes hostile if willing participants. Our questionnaire became shorter and our interview style became more focused on eliciting brief answers to particular aspects of the broader concepts we sought to analyze as the data collection went on. Our focus on individual self-identification narrowed to probing around how long individuals had been homeless, what their relationship with family was, how they came to be homeless in the local area, their conception of themselves as deviant in relation to society and their experience of criminalization as a homeless individual if any. We asked our subjects to discuss their awareness of local aid providers, and if a subject held veteran status, they were questioned as to their knowledge of local veteran services available. We, the researchers, also asked subjects to give us a brief list of what services they desired access to in the local area with no preconditions to their requests (one homeless, young traveler wanted “free water, food and free beer” wherever he went).

We approached the development of our methodology with an eye to several theoretical paradigms. The theory of symbolic interactionism is premised on the idea that individuals create and maintain the coherent, and shared, reality in which they understand

themselves to exist through social interactions, occurring within situations, with themselves, others, and the world around them. In our collection of data we attempted to ask questions that would yield our subjects' self-identification. A number of the traveling young adults expressed very similar attitudes toward a negatively perceived consumer culture, which they sought to escape from. In the discussion below we will see how such shared meaning within a subculture can help to promote a normalization of deviance relative to the dominant society that allows ostensibly deviant individuals to maintain a non-deviant, self-conception.

Differential Association and Labeling Theory are two perspectives related to analysis of social deviance. These theories helped us to analyze the data in conjunction with symbolic interactionism and subcultural theories. Differential association looks at the effect of the composition of an individual's peer group on the behavior, deviant or not, of the individual. The idea here is that if an individual spends a sufficient portion of his or her time interacting with deviant peers, then the individual will take on the deviant behavior patterns of these peers. Labeling theory discusses the idea that if an individual is labeled in a particular way by a sufficient portion of the members of the broader population, then this individual will take on the characteristics of the label applied. With respect to homeless individuals, the label of "homeless" may be accepted by the individuals and integrated into their self identifications, thus the individuals' master status becomes that of a homeless individual. These theories both fit nicely into the paradigm of symbolic interactionism with its focus on the creation of shared meanings that orient our behavior in the world.

Emile Durkheim's theory of anomie is applicable to persons experiencing homelessness. An individual can experience an anomic state when there is a disruption within their personal normative state, which is influenced by societal norms. Homelessness has a variety of causes, some of which are related to the individual, such as a personal choice by the individual to be homeless. Other causes of homelessness are systemic in nature, such as exiting the military institution without the job skills needed in order to compete in the labor market. For the individual experiencing homelessness by choice, anomie is perhaps experienced less acutely due to the fact that such persons have redefined the normative structure which they live within. Persons who experience

anomie due to abrupt changes in their normative patterns, due to systemic forces, are less apt to redefine their individual normative structures and are thus likely to feel a more acute state of anomie. Several of the veteran subjects interviewed expressed such anomie through statements made, particularly the Vietnam era veterans. Many such veterans experienced severe disruption in normative patterns upon being sent to Vietnam, and upon returning to the United States were confronted with yet more normative changes, particularly in the way they were viewed by several members of the general public. Unfortunately, several veterans gave testimony to ill treatment by civilians upon their return to the states, including being verbally taunted, and in one case physically assaulted for having participated in the killing within the country of Vietnam.

The theoretical assumptions mentioned briefly above will be fleshed out more fully in the review of literature that follows. We look at the theoretical work that has gone before to show how it has informed the methodological basis for this research. Then we will look at a variety of studies that have assessed elements of the identities and the needs of homeless individuals and populations. Before we could flesh out the method that we used to gather data on our two homeless subpopulations of interest, we had to see what sorts of studies and theoretical perspectives had already been laid down. The discussion of these works follows.

Literature Review:

In this research project we seek to answer the question: How do the two homeless sub-populations (homeless veterans and homeless traveling youth) identify themselves in their social world and what is their assessment of their needs being fulfilled by the homeless services available in the Arcata and Eureka, California area? In the discussion that follows, several theories pertinent to the manner in which we analyze data relating to the above question will be fleshed out. These theories provide a sociological framework for looking at the ways that individuals come to identify themselves as being part of a group, and how this group identity relates to their sense of self. The discussion will then move on to a description of a variety of studies that approached issues of homelessness

similar to the ones we look at here. Through looking at these studies we can see that there are certain areas already understood in the literature regarding homeless populations and their internal cultures and needs, as well we will come to see how our own area of study is still un-elucidated. Finally we will include a brief discussion of methodological problems and solutions found in the literature that have informed our own methodology.

Theory

In looking at issues of homelessness and self-identification at a general theoretical level, several perspectives are of particular import to any relevant analysis. Symbolic Interactionism provides a micro-level framework for looking at the manner in which individuals create meaning and identity for themselves and for the world around them through an interactional process within themselves and with others. Individuals create a coherent world for themselves through an interactional and social process. This process involves three parts: an orientation is taken toward an object, a social situation unfolds in which an individual internally, or with others, comes to a decision of how the object of orientation is being acted toward, and then an interpretation of the situation unfolding is made which finally gives it intersubjective meaning for all actors involved in the situation (Blumer 1969). When individuals interact with one another they create situations through which they express, explicitly and implicitly, the meanings they take with each other and with the world around them to one another.

It is through the process of symbolic interaction that collectively held meanings arise, that culture and society arise, and that the possibility for meaningful interaction with individuals outside of one's particular primary associative group can occur. Joint actions are premised on shared meanings that arise through similar repeated interpretations of actions, because "society exists in action, and must be seen in terms of action" (Blumer 1969:169). It is the patterns and collectively held meaning that arise from the intersubjectivity created in repeated interactions, and the fact that the process that occurs in one on one situations giving rise to these patterns, which is the subject of symbolic interactionism, that make this theory the foundation of the theoretical framework for this research.

In a study of multiple drug use among traveling homeless youth researchers utilized the objective manifestations of their target population's self-identification in the form of clothing, tattoos and nicknames to identify subjects (Sanders et al 2008). Members of the target population were found to have "normalized" drug use in their subculture, meaning that drug use had become "ordinary, and not necessarily 'deviant'" which led to an incorporation of drug references to costumes used by this population (Sanders et al 2008:35). Below we will look at subcultural theory, but here we will note that symbolic interactionism implies the creation of subcultures through the creation of particularly salient meaning among a group of individuals extant within a dominant culture such that this meaning is distinct from that which members of the dominant culture would ascribe to its associated object. In this case a costume or nickname will be taken to be meaningful in a positive manner by members of a subcultural group while it would be taken to have a negative meaning among members of the dominant culture. In our own research taking note of the costumes of subjects helps to identify members of our target population and adds depth to our analysis of verbal interview data.

Symbolic Interactionism shows us that the world is made meaningful for individuals through social interactions. In our minds "realities are created and transmitted... through shared sets of symbols" in social interactions (Prus 1996:24). Intersubjectivity exists when multiple people share the same meaning and understanding with regards to a specific object, idea or action. In our research we will be analyzing the various interview data to look for intersubjective understandings among the members of our target populations. Further research could compare these shared understandings to the understandings of the same phenomena by members of the broader population of Arcata and Eureka to see how unique the intersubjective world of the travelling homeless young adults and homeless veterans are. As well studies of cross-sections of these populations in different areas could yield insight into the nature of the intersubjective experience of subcultures with regards to uniqueness and spatial diversity.

Theories related to the sociological understanding of deviance in society factor into our methodology and our analysis as they must in any research surrounding populations that exist outside of the norms of the dominant society. Here I will briefly discuss labeling theory, differential association and Durkheim's functionalist approach to

deviance to describe a theoretical paradigm for analyzing the deviance of our two populations of study.

Becker (1963) puts forth a theory that connects the interactionist perspective, wherein meaning and identities are created and maintained through interaction, with a structuralist perspective, wherein factors extant at the macro level affect the development of roles and social functions. This labeling theory proposes that “social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance” (p. 41). The application of these rules and the labeling of individuals as “outsiders” in accordance with this label creates the social identity of deviancy (p. 42). At the level of interaction this theory suggests that the label of deviant or outsider applied to individuals will promote certain sorts of interactions for these individuals that will reinforce their self-identification (and others’ identification of them) as deviant. When one has internalized such a label as identity then one will begin to take on the behaviors associated with this label in more of one’s interactions. In our research we see that the degree to which homeless individuals have internalized their label as a deviant relative to society is related to the degree to which these individuals feel apart from, or anomic in relation to, the norms of the dominant society.

The initial postulate of Sutherland and Cressey’s (1992) theory of differential association is that “criminal behavior is learned” (p. 87). This concept allows for criminal or deviant behavior to be viewed as less intrinsically pathological than it often is in mainstream society. For the authors criminal behavior is “an expression of general needs and values” just as non-criminal behavior is, and therefore must be defined according to the ways in which it is learned and promoted through associations and interactions rather than according to certain values or drives (p. 89). Behavior, criminal and non-criminal, is all learned in the same way, and this is through exemplification and teaching. When one is generally associating with those that commit criminal acts under certain circumstances, one will learn to commit these same criminal acts under similar circumstances. A potential weakness of this theory is that it avoids explicitly describing the manner in which social class and relations to the dominant society can promote associations by particular individuals (existing in certain social locations) as being more or less likely to associate with certain sorts of criminal characters. In its defense, though, this theory

purports only to describe a mechanism by which deviant or criminal behavior is learned and to suggest that such behavior is learned through normal processes theoretically available to any individual.

In this vein of discussing criminality and deviance as behavior emitted through the same channels as other more “normal” behaviors, we come naturally to Durkheim’s functionalist approach to deviance. Durkheim (1938) suggests that deviance is not only normal, but functionally necessary to a healthy social system. Deviance serves several functions in a given society. Foremost deviance offends the collective conscience and allows the majority of society to reaffirm their own morality through the sanctioning of deviant behavior. In accord with Durkheim’s organismic analogy, deviance can be viewed as serving a mutagenic purpose. Those who deviate, in pro and anti-social manners, from the norms of society, show that “collective sentiments are sufficiently flexible to take on a new form” (p. 74). When we look at the travelers in our research we see that there is enough play in our collective conscience relating to norms of economic behavior and systemic integration for these individuals to exist. Of course there is no implication here that society is moving toward a nomadic structure, but we can see that such individuals are normal to society to an extent and that they may reflect a certain generalized ambivalence to integrating completely into an uncertain and intensively regulated economic and normative framework.

A study by Shane Blackman (2005) on the development of youth subcultural theory has informed the development of this research. The article, published in the “*Journal of Youth Studies*,” details two primary theoretical threads on the subject of subcultural emergence in youth populations. On the one hand we have the traditional structuralist take on the subject that sees subcultures as emerging in conflict with the dominant culture. On the other hand we have the poststructuralist and postmodernist view that meaning created through social interactions for individuals is the creative force in emergence of apparent youth culture. The article goes on to show the contradiction between traditional and postmodern perspectives on the subject, suggesting that the modern conflict oriented view is less problematic in the face of empirical evidence.

Blackman (2005) describes the modern (as opposed to postmodern) thread of youth subcultural theory as deriving from the work of Robert Merton. The model helps to

describe “forms of solidarity that contrast with the dominant norms” of society as evolving out of a conflict with the dominant society (Blackman 2005:2). The emergence of a subculture has structural roots relating to the needs for a certain subset of the youth population to have positive reinforcement in their social interactions when their desires or perceived needs run counter to the dominant paradigm. A conflict with the normative structure of society leads to the development and objective emission (through collective actions, costuming, vocabulary etc.) of elements of a new culture by this group deviant from mainstream society. According to this perspective there is a structural and conflict oriented element in subcultural emergence.

According to the poststructuralist and postmodern view of youth subcultures we see an emphasis on the creation of meaning by individuals in interaction and the diffusion of this meaning by the media. Blackman quotes Steve Redhead as saying that subcultures are comprised of “‘free floating’ signifiers that enhance differentiation of individual experience,” and suggests that there is a shallowness and superficiality to youth subcultures (Blackman 2005:9). From this viewpoint the very objective signifiers cited in modern views of subcultures become shallow iterations of an ideal contained primarily in the head of the one emitting the signification. In other words the subcultural meaning is unique to each individual holding and emitting it (punk is qualitatively different conceptually to the lead singer of the punk band and the young adult dancing in the audience). This view leads to a weak and transitory understanding of what a subculture is. Blackman (2005) suggests that looking at the rave subculture is a good way to see the very real evidence of physical conflict with the dominant paradigm embodied in youth subcultures. Here we see kids getting together to dance and take drugs in the face of a very real threat of state violence or sanction. To suggest that these youth are completely ideal and shallow in their subcultural existence is problematic.

In our research we see that the traveling young adult homeless population there is a clear conflict with the dominant society. This agrees with the structuralist theory of subcultural development discussed above, and it also works within an overall framework basing itself on the intersubjective meaning that is the focus of symbolic interactionism. While the development of a youth subculture is driven initially by conflict with the dominant culture, it is maintained and transmitted to new individuals through interaction

between individuals and one another, and between individuals and the media. It is important to recognize that the structuralist paradigm for assessing the route of subcultural emergence does not impinge on the theoretical validity of symbolic interactionism as describing the means of transmission of subculture between individuals.

Karl Mannheim discusses a variation on the Marxian themes of ideology and false consciousness in his paper “Ideology and Utopia” (1929). Mannheim sets out two distinct definitions of different types of ideology. In the “particular” form, ideologies are “conscious disguises of the real nature of a situation” that “protect the interests” of their holder (Mannheim 1929:336). This is an elaborate psychological process in which a falsehood is incorporated, through a rational process, into an individual’s consciousness. A lie is something which one believes to be false as he or she is putting it forth, an assertion based on particular ideology is one that does not hold up under empirical inspection, but which holds for the individual’s currently held world view.

Mannheim (1929) contrasts this particular ideology with the “total” ideology which is the ideology of an entire “age” or “historico-social group” (Pp. 336). In this formulation we see a concept that is injected into the collective consciousness of an entire group. Mannheim points out, that total ideologies have a sui generis reality of their own for their “inner structure is not to be found in a mere integration” of the experiences of individuals (Mannheim 1929:338). So individuals will have experienced a portion of the elements of a total ideology, but even the generalized concepts an individual has not directly experienced are available to him.

The validity of one’s ethical perspective, in practical terms, is predicated on the existence of a collective representation of the world, a culture, which allows for and promotes the expression of this perspective in behavior. Mannheim (1929) discusses how the ethical norm of not lending for profit made sense in a time “of intimate and neighborly relations”, but that as the character of relations in society shifted away from this form, “this ethical precept took on an ideological character” (Pp. 340). We can see that individuals and groups develop ideological psychological patterns to negate the potential cognitive dissonance that would come along with the practical exigencies of life requiring one to go outside of one’s ethical perspective. As an example in our research, we see that many of the homeless traveling young adults express a moral opposition to a

“consumerist” culture. And yet these same individuals have access to cell phones, ostensibly paid for by family, at a nearly universal rate. If we see the utilization of high-tech consumer commodities, even practical ones, as being consumerist we must go through some ideological twists in our minds to be able to rail against consumerist culture while owning and using a cell phone.

Giroux (2003) presents a conflict themed analysis of the status of youth in contemporary America in his paper on “Racial injustice and disposable youth in the age of zero tolerance”. This paper discusses what can be viewed as a shift in some respects from an organic toward a more mechanical style of social control in the parlance of Durkheim. Punitive measures are re-introduced into broader society in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001 and all deviant subpopulations come under the scrutiny of the state. In this context we see that homeless individuals and deviant youth subpopulations become seen as potentially criminal, as opposed to most likely benign, by the social order. From our look at the theory that subcultures emerge among the youth as a response to a conflict with the dominant social order we can posit from Giroux’s analysis that it is becoming more and more likely in a post September 11th world that the rate of youth subcultural emergence will likely increase.

The perception of youth, and particularly subpopulations of youth relative to the dominant norm, like youth of color, is becoming more and more as potential criminals (Giroux 2003). This increasing criminalization of the concept of youth will add strain to the relationship between youth and authority, and between youth and the normative regulation of the adult world generally. This in turn will lead to an increasing prevalence of and strength of youth subcultures. In our research we are looking at a population of young adults likely to have found their origin to some degree in anomic feelings. In our research we look at the ideas and perceptions of our subjects with regard to the issue of criminalization of homelessness. The individuals we are looking at are likely members of the groups Giroux refers to as being perceived as threatening in the post 9/11 era, and so their perceptions on the issue are important data.

Surely, the overall homeless population may be perceived as threatening by some, and the homeless veteran by no means is exempt from the ire directed at the homeless by many within the housed population. Robert Prus and Scott Grills (2003), in their book

titled “The Deviant Mystique”, go into great detail in uncovering the individual participation in deviant subcultures.

An issue concerning the homeless veterans is as to whether or not those interviewed in our study are transient in their homelessness, or if the homeless condition is of a longer term. Prus and Grills suggest that, “Participation in subcultures may endure for extended periods of time, but they may also be highly fleeting in essence” (2003:100). Although, as with some deviant subcultures, reentry into the subculture may be nothing more than a yearning by the individual to return to the collective vision of said subculture, we do not believe that for the homeless veteran this is the case.

While the homeless traveling young adult may be intrigued by “homeless” living, we believe that, and as Prus and Grills (2003) suggest, some members enter into deviant subcultures inadvertently. The term “inadvertent” insinuates that entering into a situation is somehow accidental, or not on purpose. This may very well be the case for the homeless veterans since at one time they were paid and housed, with full medical and dental benefits. We can only assume that post-military, situations came about that led the homeless veteran to become homeless, because our assumption is also that the homeless veterans are not homeless because they found the lifestyle intriguing.

Pruss and Grills (2003) discuss the issue of solitary deviance as it relates to a participant within a deviant subculture who is acting alone within it. While a person may identify with the deviant subculture, such as acknowledgement of being among the homeless population, the person may only participate in solitary activities within that subculture. Pruss and Grills state:

“Subcultural participants may also envision themselves as solitary deviants within deviant subcultures when they view themselves as more reluctant participants in specific group settings, or consider themselves thought of (and treated) as marginal, undesirable, oppositional or disloyal by others in the subculture” (2003:163)

Perhaps, as is discussed by the authors, when a person is unsure of their place within the deviant subculture, or if the situation is so overwhelming to them, solitary activities within the deviant subculture may be a coping mechanism.

For the homeless, disinvolvement with the police authorities may sometimes be mandatory, especially if one is to conduct all aspects of one’s life under the public eye.

Such practices of disinvolvement may include, but are not limited to: monitoring of police drive-by schedules, development of escape strategies in the case of detection, and perhaps the development of coping mechanisms in the case of apprehension for violating a law. Pruss and Grills (2003) suggest that instead becoming disinvolved in the above manners, the deviant may, "...decrease involvements in instances of problematic activities, or minimize the obtrusiveness of problematic activities" (Pp. 250). In either strategies of disinvolvement, the individual must be cognitively aware of his/her situation in ways that those who behold to the collective moral order must see as exhaustive of time and efforts, of which would be better spent in the pursuit of non-deviant behaviors and activities.

Wood (2000), in his paper "threat transcendence, ideological articulation, and frame of reference reconstruction: preliminary concepts for a theory of subcultural schism," lays out several concepts related to the emergence of new subcultural groups through conflict within a previously cohered group leading to a schism. This paper from "Deviant Behavior: An Interdisciplinary Journal" discusses the idea that subcultural groups develop within the paradigm of a dominant culture. A subculture is by its nature a reaction to the dominant culture. It puts forth a set of norms, values and other cultural constructs in a perceived conflict with those of the dominant culture (Wood 2000).

It is when a conflict arises amongst members of the subcultural group that a schism occurs. Wood suggests that cliques may form within a subcultural group, but that schism occurs "only when a subculture clique becomes a culture engine" (Wood 2000:36). This means that when a clique within a subculture gains sufficient internal self-identification not only to identify its own norms and values, but to transmit them quickly and powerfully, a rift with the dominant subcultural group will emerge. In this situation a schism occurs that leads to two independent subcultures existing where only one had previously.

This shift in the composition of a subculture through bifurcation into two separate subcultures is a process (Wood 2000). The fact that these developments are processual is important to our own research because in some sense they are a natural progression of the conflict between a subculture and the dominant culture over time and through periods of social change and upheaval. In looking at the way that homeless individuals identify

themselves we came across several individuals able and willing to define themselves as being a part of a particular subcultural group. No individuals were inclined to define a conflict with other particular related subcultural groups. With this data the theory provided by Wood is not invalidated, but it seems that looking to the meaning attached to the subcultural affiliation defined by individuals is more relevant to our research. This theory helps to inform our discussion of these findings, however, as the particular subcultural group of “crusties” did likely arise at one time through a schism with a broader subcultural group. Perhaps after a schism it is possible for the conflict between groups to subside and allow for peaceful coexistence.

Studies in Deviance

Martijn and Sharpe (2005), in their study titled “Pathways to youth homelessness,” assessed the causative factors in a sample of homeless youth in Australia and New Zealand becoming homeless. This work from the Journal “Social Science and Medicine” focused on issues dealing with drug and alcohol issues, experience of trauma, experience of psychological disorders, experience of family troubles and of having a criminal history in the past of the homeless youth. Data was gathered from detailed interviews lasting approximately three hours. Thirty-five subjects were interviewed for this research. The data was coded according to the five factors mentioned above, and the results showed five different pathways to homelessness.

The five pathways Martijn and Sharpe (2005) found that half of the subjects were in one of two pathways: “Trauma and psychological problems (the absence of drug and alcohol)” and “Drug and alcohol and family problems”. A smaller but still notable section of the subjects came to be homeless through pathways involving either drugs and alcohol with trauma, or through family problems alone. Around five percent of the sample became homeless via a pathway involving trauma exclusively. The study found that after becoming homeless individuals tended to develop even more psychological, criminal and substance abusive elements in their lives.

Drawing on the work of criminologists to explain deviant behaviors we turn now to a study by Agnew (2006) titled “Storylines As a Neglected Cause of Crime”. The point of this article is to show that the traditional factors such as “low self-control” or

“interaction with deviant peers” that impact one’s life over a long period of time are not always the most important explanative factors in the actual commission of a criminal, or deviant, act (Agnew 2006:121). Agnew suggests that a temporary deviation from the normal flow of events in the life of an individual can be the final cause of a criminal act. Some particular examples he uses are a sudden need to repay a gambling debt, the need to get drugs, or the aftermath of a temporary spending spree may lead to the need for cash quickly (ibid). In the case of a violent deviant act the storyline may follow an altercation at a bar or a random argument with a stranger on the street. Under such circumstances an individual with no prior history of violence or larceny, someone typically capable of self control who does not regularly consort with criminals, may take a criminal or deviant act.

Agnew (2006) helps us to look carefully at the responses members of our populations of interest give with regard to how they came to be homeless and how they meet their needs for subsistence. In one subject a temporary shift to a state of poverty at home led her to begin traveling at age 14. This article helps to inform us of some of the potential causative factors in the motion of individuals into the homeless population and may help us to analyze some of the deviant elements of our study population’s existence.

In Johnson, Kurtbeck and Hoyt’s (2005) piece “Predictors of social network composition among homeless and runaway adolescents” the authors discuss a variety of factors in adolescents’ becoming homeless relating to their social networks. This study uses quantitative analyses of survey questionnaire responses by 428 individuals in four Midwestern cities to assess the composition of the individuals’ social networks and what factors in their lives relate to the quality of these networks. The study concludes that family is a factor in even runaway homeless youth’s social networks, and even in the social networks of runaway youth involved in deviant behaviors. The authors go on to suggest that taking the importance of parents as elements of youth’s social networks into account in formulating public policies aimed at re-incorporating homeless and deviant youth into society would be helpful (ibid).

This study helps to inform the way that we probe around issues of social networks in the self-identification of our subjects. It is clear from Johnson, Kurtbeck and Hoyt’s (2005) work that the groups that individuals associate with must be taken into account in an understanding of how the individuals came to be where they are. The composition of

an individual's social network will help to determine that individual's self-identification and will help to determine the meanings that individuals attach to their group membership. In the cases of our populations homeless travelers strengthen their self-conception of being a part of that group by interacting with more members of that group. Similarly homeless veterans create a meaningful identity for themselves by interacting with others like them. The issue of social networks relates strongly to the theory of differential association.

Anecdotal evidence of a homeless individual not identifying with his homeless group membership is given by Erich Goode (2001), and is a chapter within his book titled "Deviance in Everyday Life: Personal Accounts of Unconventional Lives". The chapter is titled "Sam, Defender of the Downtrodden" (p. 201). As stated, Sam the homeless man does not identify with his homeless group, but even more interestingly, the administration of the university where Sam "lives" do not identify him as a member of the homeless community either, but rather as a "fixture" of the university.

While on our own university campus, where the homeless can be easily observed sporadically throughout any given day, there is no tolerance for homeless persons living on the premises, intolerance for Sam's presence on a university campus is all but ignored.

The author, Goode (2001), suggests that the reason Sam is tolerated on the campus is related to social disorganization theory. Such a theory suggests that poor, disorganized, urban neighborhoods attract residents who are unstable and very mobile, but Sam's campus is not poor, nor is it disorganized. Goode (2001) states, "The fact is, the denizens of a university tolerate and accept a much wider variety of "nonconforming" behaviors than would be accepted in other situations" (p. 217).

Whitbeck, Chen and Johnson (2005), in their study "Food insecurity among homeless and runaway adolescents," find that food insecurity is fairly common, being experienced by about one third of people in this group. The paper is published in "Public Health Nutrition." The authors suggest that more should be studied regarding the nutritional needs of homeless adolescents due to the fact that members of this population are at a crucial part of their physical and cognitive development. Having young people suffering psychologically and physically from a lack of adequate food supply could lead to longer term issues for them relating to their ability to be maximally productive

members of society. The authors also suggest that food insecurity could exacerbate the other issues commonly faced by homeless youth involving neglect and psychological trauma (ibid.).

The idea that food insecurity can exacerbate other stresses and traumas being experienced by homeless individuals is relevant to our research. If we are looking at the likelihood that individual members of a population will take part in deviant behaviors, adding another stressor to these individuals' existence will prove to be a causal factor in the commission of future deviant acts.

In their paper "victims and offenders: accounts of paybacks, invulnerability, and financial gain among homeless youth" the authors Tyler and Johnson (2004) look at issues of overlapping victim and offender statuses among homeless youth. Published in "Deviant Behavior," the study looks at interviews with 40 homeless individuals. The youth interviewed were found to be very receptive to a semi-structured interview style with relatively open ended questions administered in a semi-private location. This methodological approach is similar to the one we are looking to use in our own research, and so the positive results yielded in the research suggests we may have a higher than otherwise extant chance of positive outcomes in our interviews.

Tyler and Johnson (2004) sought to understand the relationship between being an offender and a victim of crime among a population where individuals have some likelihood of being in both categories. Their study found that the three primary motivators for offending are as a "payback," for "financial gain/survival," or to seem "invulnerable" to peers (Tyler and Johnson 2004:433). Victimization is seen as arising from similar themes. The authors suggest that the unique context of being homeless and young, of having to struggle against adversity for survival in an ongoing basis and having to deal with conflict in social interactions on the street leads to a perceived need to commit offenses to deal with one's situation. Similarly those offended against are likely to be in a similar circumstance and will need to respond to victimization with counter-offenses to recoup losses of face and of resources.

This perspective of overlapping offender and victim roles in a difficult and survival oriented setting mediated often by violent pasts and always by a violent culture seems like it would be resonant with most individuals that have spent much time homeless. It

will be informative to ask when discussing the group identifications of the homeless individuals in our study how they have been victimized and how they have responded to this potential victimization. With our limited time resources for the research such probing may prove too costly and not be feasible, but this would be an informative topic to research further among various subpopulations of the homeless

The work of Martijn and Sharpe factors into the development of our own research insofar as it suggests some possibilities for what we may find are the causative factors in the population of young adults we are looking at becoming homeless. As well we may find that the populations we are investigating have distinct pathways to their homelessness in comparison to the subjects of Martijn and Sharpe's study. Several of the traveling young adult homeless exhibited clear signs of drug and alcohol use, but none attributed their homeless status to these issues. This could relate to an issue with our methodology insofar as we are not given the "whole story" of how individuals came to be homeless by these individuals. It is theoretically useful, from a symbolic interactionist perspective, to look at the stated meaning individuals have regarding their homeless status and compare it to objective elements of their situation ignored in their self-identification.

In our own research we are looking to assess the needs of our populations as they see them. This will help us to get at what unique preferences and needs homeless veterans and traveling young adult homeless individuals in this area have. We also wish to assess the awareness, particularly of the traveling population, of the services that are available in the area. While our research is in no way focused on altering the life courses of the subjects we will observe, as we seek only to assess their perceived identities and needs and not to change their preferences or desires, our desire in constructing our project is to gather information that may be able to help service providers tailor their services to a more diverse population. Looking at factors affecting the behavioral health of homeless individuals helps us to construct a set of questions for our interviews that can effectively get at the information that will be able to help inform service providers in the manner we desire.

Homeless Service Programs

Zerger, Strehlow and Gundlapalli (2008), in their paper published in “American Behavioral Scientist” compiled a survey of information from different studies on the emotional health of homeless young adults. Their paper, titled “Homeless Young Adults and Behavioral Health: An Overview” suggests that homeless young adults are a vulnerable population and experience a variety of negative behavioral issues. In the area of health services the authors suggest that homeless individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 face unique challenges in attaining health care due to their over-representation in the broader society as uninsured as well as the fact that the services are geared toward adults, and often ignore the particular preferences and needs of young adults (ibid.). The study also finds that young adults have significant instances of abuse either at home or on the street. A study is referenced that found that among 328 subjects 43% had experienced family neglect and 26% had experienced sexual abuse before becoming homeless (ibid.). In their conclusion, the authors suggest that it is important that service providers and other social support structures retune their offerings to better suit the unique needs and preferences of young adults, as by doing so the potential for healthy and positive outcomes for these individuals can be maximized.

In a report by the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO)(2006), much the same conclusion is reached as the article reviewed above, albeit the criticism is leveled at the provision of services instead of types of services offered. The report suggests a need for improved communication between homeless veteran service providers, especially those involved in the Grant and Per Diem Program (GPD), and improved follow-up between such agencies regarding the homeless veteran’s successful transition from the GPD program into other housing arrangements. A brief explanation of the GPD program, as put forth by the GAO, is as follows:

Per diem grants pay a fixed dollar amount for each day an authorized bed is occupied by an eligible veteran up to the maximum number of beds allowed by the grants. The Veterans Administration (VA) makes payments after an agency has housed the veteran, on a cost reimbursement basis, and the agency may use the payments to offset operating costs, such as staff salaries and utilities. (2006:6)

The VA funding of the GPD program is contingent upon homeless veteran service programs compliance with VA regulations concerning the administration of such programs. Within the GAO report (2006), it is stated that some of the homeless veteran service providers did not understand all of the GPD program policies, and that such misunderstandings could affect the provider's ability to offer services, as well as affect a veteran's ability to get services. Equally as important to not understanding such policies, the issue is raised as to service providers not being fully aware of GPD program changes. The GAO report concludes, with regards to improved communication among service providers, that, "The VA recognizes that communication to providers and liaisons needs to be improved" (2006:26), but at the time of the report, no follow-up to a call for a mandatory provider conference had occurred.

As stated, the GAO report also criticized the follow-up of homeless veterans who had transitioned out of the GPD program. Many homeless veteran service providers have program rules to which veterans must comply, not only in order for the service providers to continue receiving GPD program funds, but so that service providers can actually meet *their* program goals. Among the goals of such programs are: vocational training, stable employment, and assistance to the veteran in obtaining entitlement benefits. However, as of 2006, the GAO reported that, "...many providers had not tracked their performance in achieving these objectives and some VA liaisons had not reviewed the providers' performance" (2006:32). The GAO recommends that service providers review their homeless veteran's performance during their time in a program utilizing GPD funds, but to also assess the veterans' status after leaving service provider programs. The GAO (2006) recommends a status review of veterans at 1, 3, 6, and 12 months after they have left such programs. By instituting such reviews, homeless veteran service providers can better gauge their performance, but also report back to the GAO that the GPD program funds that are being allocated are providing positive assistance to the homeless veterans. Further review of the veteran status once leaving homeless assistance programs can also act as an indicator as to whether or not the programs themselves helped to provide positive outcomes for the homeless veterans.

Studies

Having looked at the theoretical perspectives that have focused the formulation of this research, it is important to look at the methods and conclusions of some studies that have gone before and which have also informed this research.

One such study, which heavily informed our research design, was conducted by Olga Acosta and Paul A. Toro (2000). The researchers sought to create a needs assessment of homeless adults using a probability sampling technique which drew subjects from a much larger longitudinal study. What makes Acosta and Toro's research design unique is that they sought out the homeless voice in creating the needs assessment. Acosta and Toro note that, "...few studies have been conducted which directly ask homeless individuals to elaborate on the types of assistance they would find most beneficial" (2000:344).

The needs of the homeless are often times depictions of what society deems as the needs of the homeless individuals. Homeless experts and policy analysts may assume that the number one need of the homeless person is housing. Acosta and Toro note that, "While homeless persons are in need of affordable housing, our sample rated the needs for physical safety, further education, and transportation higher than their need for affordable housing" (2000:353).

As stated, our research design was heavily influenced by Acosta and Toro's (2000) research in that we are seeking to make the homeless voice heard with regards to a needs assessment. Acosta and Toro, within their conclusion section, suggest that future researchers "...remain cautious when estimating the needs of a population from a sample of persons seen by service providers as the data may not reflect the needs of those who fail to utilize services" (2000:362). Hence, our research design will be inclusive of homeless persons contacted through service providers, as well as those homeless persons contacted through other means.

Culture

In their book Renegade Kids, Suburban Outlaws: From Youth Culture to Delinquency, Wooden and Blazack (2000) include a brief ethnographic look at the

“gutterpunk” subset of youth culture. In another study on drug abuse by travelling homeless youth discussed below, the term gutterpunk is used by some in this population to describe themselves (Sanders et al. 2008). Wooden and Blazack (2000) suggest that a variety of different factors lead to youth becoming homeless, from escaping abuse to escaping what the youth perceive as excessive structure in their lives. In our research we seek to understand the initial and primary motivation for individuals to become homeless.

Wooden and Blazack (2000) also suggest that a visual aesthetic exemplified in body art and costuming are central to the portion of our target population self-identified as gutterpunks’ identities. While our research is not focused on variables dealing with the visual aesthetic of our subjects, issues pertaining to costuming and body art factored into the notes we’ve taken and these considerations have a place in our discussion. The visual aesthetic of the traveling young adult homeless factors into their self-identification for all subjects when taken in conjunction with their verbal data.

This section of the book also addresses the fact that there are individuals that will signify their status visually as being affiliated with our population of interest, but who are in fact outside (Wooden and Blazack 2000). In the postmodern sense that subcultures have an aspect that is purely ideal, there are individuals in the broader community that will wish to appear as members of the culture for the purpose of gaining some of the status of group membership without having to face the full consequences of memberships. Since subcultures are in some degree of conflict with the dominant culture there will be social sanctions for membership, and yet from a symbolic interactionist perspective the meaning that these outsiders take from their visual emission of subcultural identity and the meaning others ascribe to it is important to our discussion. This is something we will have to look out for in sampling our population. The self-identification relative to group membership that would be put forth by these part-time group members would not be at all representative of the experience of actual, or full-time, group members, and yet some subjects may be part of this outsider group. We have no independent way to verify group membership.

Shelley Mallett (2004) and her research partners conducted a study called “Practicing homelessness: a typology approach to young people’s daily routines” printed in the “Journal of Adolescence”. These authors importantly introduced the idea that

looking for typologies of populations should be entered into without using prejudgmental terminology (i.e. gutterpunk or urban anarchist) because it will inevitably bring an element of subjectivity into a research project (ibid.). This team sought to use a broad questionnaire containing a set of 22 different potential daily activities of the subjects with a scale allowing for them to weight the importance of different activities in their daily routines. This allowed for a wide range of potential “types” to occur among the target population. A computer based quantitative analysis was then undertaken using the data from 1263 homeless individuals to come up with four primary clusters to be typified. The researchers found that these four types related to the types of social engagements of the individuals, and that these social associations were, consequently, related to the types of activities individual’s engaged in.

In our research we have attempted to use the most general possible definitions of our populations of study for just the reasons put forth by Mallett’s group of avoiding prejudging the population of study (Mallett et al. 2004). Of course we do have some prejudicial elements ingrained in our methodology, we have attempted to avoid such prejudgment as looking at “urban anarchists,” “gutterpunks” or “homeless Vietnam veterans.” Defining our research populations in such a specific manner would make sampling the population more difficult and would likely color the sorts of questions that we asked and the way that we would inevitably have to frame the results.

Sanders, Lankenau, Jackson-Bloom and Hathazi (2008) in a paper titled “Multiple Drug Use and Polydrug Use Amongst Homeless Traveling Youth,” discusses the prevalence of the use of multiple drugs among members of a population very similar to one of the two we will study in our own research. This paper may seem to be thematically related to issues of deviance, but enough of the information pertinent to our own research has to do with issues of culture that I feel it important to discuss the paper in this section. The study addresses the quantitative issues of the ubiquity of drug use among the study population, but also addresses the subcultural issues suggested by the very ubiquity of drug use in the population. It was found that every single one of the 131 subjects of this study had used marijuana and ketamine in their lifetimes and that all but one had consumed alcohol. Other drugs were used by many subjects and many more reported that the only reason they hadn’t used particular drugs was that they had never had access to

them, but that they would use them if offered. Approximately 81.6% of respondents had used both alcohol and cannabis in the last thirty days. Other drugs of choice were cocaine, heroin and methamphetamines (ibid.).

These quantitative findings suggested to the author that drug use, and specifically multiple drug use, was a normalized part of the culture of traveling homeless youth (Sanders et al. 2008). This effectively means that the use of multiple drugs and drug use generally is not considered deviant behavior in this culture. It was not clear from the research, as it was not the purpose of the research, whether not using drugs is considered deviant among this population. The fact that the use of drugs is a normal part of this subcultural group, while drug use is considered deviant in the dominant culture and is defined as illegal by the state, leads to a conflict with the dominant society and the strengthening of a subcultural identity. This subcultural identity is then expressed through costuming, body art and vocabulary by its members. The authors here describe a variety of body art and costuming elements used to identify group membership in this group including tattoos of “40s” or of “needle-tracks” and of costuming elements like t-shirts with cannabis leaves on them (Sander et al. 2008:28).

In our own research looking for costuming elements similar to those described herein may provide some extra data through the analysis of the department of subjects of our research. It may also simply help us identify potential research subjects according to their costuming. At the same time it may be dangerous to limit our search for subjects according to such costuming criteria as that may cause us to ignore someone that fits our criteria for a homeless traveling young adult if they happen to not use drugs or affiliate visibly with that particular part of our study population.

The issue of normalizing subcultural behaviors as non-deviant is relevant to the self-identification of all of our subjects. None of the traveling young adult homeless individuals readily identified themselves as deviant, while clearly their lifestyle exists in opposition to the normative values of the dominant culture. This is because such behaviors have become normalized in these individuals’ subcultures. The homeless veteran population was mixed in their responses as to whether or not they considered themselves to be deviant, with several subjects stating that since society considered them to be deviant, then they considered themselves to be deviant in their lifestyle.

Housing

In reviewing the literature surrounding homelessness, there is a recurrent topic mentioned, and that is the topic of housing. Much of the literature regarding housing for the homeless involves discussions of affordable housing, subsidized housing, transitional housing, and/or emergency shelter housing.

Affordable housing within the Eureka/Arcata, California areas is discussed within a master's thesis by Deborah T. Waxman (2006). Waxman (2006) presents evidence of the rise in home prices and rents within Humboldt County, with particular emphasis on the Eureka/Arcata areas. Waxman states that although several high paying jobs have left the area, such as timber industry jobs, "...there have been increases in employment opportunities in the area, but personal incomes have declined because most jobs have been created in the low-paying service sector" (2006:68).

The increase in housing prices, coupled with deteriorating wages in the Eureka/Arcata areas makes many more people vulnerable to homelessness. According to Waxman (2006), the move in costs, which can include security deposit and first/last months rent, can be debilitating costs for those in low income households, possibly forcing some into homelessness. When homelessness results from the inability to afford move in costs, transitional housing may be an option, if such an option exists.

According to Waxman (2006), "Eureka is home to the largest numbers of affordable housing units, residents in poverty, homeless individuals, and homeless services in Humboldt County" (p. 89). In fact, as Waxman (2006) points out, Arcata does not zone for transitional housing, or emergency shelters. This would help to explain why Eureka shoulders much of the responsibility in dealing with the local homeless issue. The attitudes of NIMBY'ists (Not in my Back Yard) within the Arcata area is one possible reason for the low volume of homeless service agencies within Arcata, as well as the near absence of transitional housing within Arcata.

Authors Culhane and Metraux, in their article entitled "Rearranging the Deck Chairs or Reallocating the Lifeboats" (2008), propose an alternative to the current method of dealing with homelessness. The current method involves dealing with persons only after they have become homeless, but Culhane and Metraux's proposal involves the

“...reallocating of resources to community programs that provide services regardless of housing status, rather than through residential institutions such as shelters” (2008:111).

One of the claims made by the authors suggests that the provisional costs of supportive housing, to the chronic and episodic homeless single adults, could be severely offset by the reduction in use of emergency shelters and other homeless services. As an example of cost savings, Culhane and Metraux state:

“Research shows that the annual cost of a shelter bed for a single adult ranges from \$4,100 in Atlanta to \$19,800 in New York city, with a median cost per bed per year being \$9,300. Thus, in many jurisdictions, expenditures for shelters that essentially maintain a person in a state of homelessness could be reallocated to offset the cost of rental subsidies that provide permanent housing” (2008:114)

The center for Housing and Urban Development estimate, according to the authors, that through an increase in funding for housing units since 2001 has reduced the number of chronically homeless individuals by upwards of 20,000 individuals (Culhane and Metraux 2008). This is an example of a reallocation of the lifeboats for the homeless, as opposed to a rearrangement of the deck chairs, which is shown throughout the study as not being the most prudent manner in which to allocate precious financial resources.

Another example of the allocation of financial resources towards the goal of keeping persons housed is illustrated in the masters’ project conducted by Elizabeth R. Matsumoto (2006). Although Matsumoto’s project was directed towards the financial feasibility of permanent supportive housing for mentally ill homeless individuals residing in Humboldt County, California, the results could be extrapolated into permanent supportive housing situations made available to other subpopulations of the homeless population within Humboldt County.

The results of the study by Matsumoto indicate that:

The demand for supportive housing outweighs the supply of existing programs aimed at supporting mentally ill homeless individuals in creating and maintaining a stable home in Humboldt County, and it is likely that existing funding sources can be reasonably secured to cover the costs associated with the development and ongoing operation of supportive

housing in Humboldt County. (2006:40)

The Humboldt Housing and Homeless Coalition (HHHC) estimated that in 2004 there were approximately 1,280 homeless individuals in Humboldt County, with approximately 273 of those individuals residing in temporary housing, and of those 273 individuals, 189 were severely mentally ill (Matsumoto 2006). Assuredly, of the 1,008 homeless individuals not residing in temporary housing, many of those persons are also mentally but not able to be accommodated by the supportive housing system.

The literature we have reviewed above helped us to better understand the data available on the populations we sought to study, and helped us to define a research question and hypotheses, the study of which was relevant. This information helped greatly to inform the design of our methodology.

Methodology:

Objective

Studies of the phenomena known as homelessness have been done at the macro level, as well as the micro level. Evidence of macro level research is given with regards to studies which have looked at the structural causes of homelessness; the lack of affordable housing is but one avenue this type of research has explored. The micro level research that has been done has looked at the individual homeless persons, or groups of homeless persons, in an attempt to explain possible deficiencies within such persons or groups that may help to explain their homeless state; mental illness and drug/ alcohol addiction are but a few of the individual variables investigated.

The purpose of this exploratory study is to examine the self-identification process of the “homeless young adult travelers”, as well as that of the “homeless veteran” in Arcata and Eureka, California. In addition, a needs assessment was conducted within both groups with the goal of identifying perceived, distinct needs of both groups, and as to whether or not those needs are, in the opinions of the subjects, being met by the local homeless service agencies.

The study seeks to lay the framework for future research that may be able to determine generalizable trends among these homeless populations with regards to their understanding of their role in society, their status in relation to the normative structure of society, their place within a peer group, and that group's status within society. Here we found a variety of data that point toward a complex range of potential identities among both populations of interest.

Units of Analysis

The units of analysis for the project are individuals whom meet the criteria set forth for homelessness, and for either homeless traveling young adult, or homeless veteran. Generalizations can be made regarding the groups that the individuals under study belong to. In analyzing the data on individual subjects we observe consistency within the statements of needs of the individuals and thereby formulate generalizations which are presented as needs of the group.

Sampling

The exploratory study was conducted using qualitative interviews with the sampled subjects. The reason for the qualitative, naturalist approach is to engage the homeless persons in public spaces and hear their perceptions of themselves, as well as their perception of their individual needs. We believe that any other approach to this study would lend itself to an evaluation of the subjects and our perceptions of them and their needs. Notes were taken during the interviews, as well as a digital voice recorder used, with the subjects' expressed permission. (A copy of the questions used follows the Bibliography at the end of this document).

The sampling techniques used in this study is non-probability techniques which will include purposive/judgment sampling and snowball sampling. With regards to the Arcata area, the downtown plaza and Endeavor locations are known places where homeless, and non-homeless, persons congregate. In reaching out to the traveling young adult homeless population an effort was made to approach those individuals panhandling

around town as well. In Eureka, the St. Vincent DePaul soup kitchen is also a location which yielded individuals whom fit our study criteria.

Concepts and Indicators

The main concept for the project is that of homelessness. Homelessness is defined here according to the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, which states that a homeless person is an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, or a person who resides in a shelter, transitional program, or a place that is not designed for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping accommodations.

Indicators that were used to identify individuals whom qualify as homeless were those which were identified within the aforementioned definition of homelessness. Examples of such are persons whom sleep in a residence of a friend/ acquaintance and for a short duration, those persons sleeping in vacant lots/ buildings, under bridges, etc. As mentioned above these may also be individuals that are making a choice to travel in a location distant from their fixed residence and who take on other lifestyle characteristics of the homeless for a duration while traveling.

The concept of a homeless veteran was also used in the project. The concept is defined as; a person who qualifies as homeless according to the McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, and who also possesses the indicators of homelessness.

Indicators of a homeless veteran are, first and foremost, one who qualifies as homeless, but one who has also served within the U.S. Armed Forces and received a discharge with the characterization of either honorable, or dishonorable. The reasoning for the inclusion of an honorable/dishonorable discharge as an indicator is due to the fact that a veteran must have been honorably discharged from the Armed Services in order to receive post-service benefits, particularly those services offered up by the Veterans Administration.

The concept of homeless traveling young adult is used to define the second population to be analyzed. The concept of “homeless” has been defined above, and due to difficulties with interacting with minors in a research setting and the methodological need for precision in definition of populations of study, “young adult” is defined as individuals aged 18-28. The concept of “traveling” in relation to an individual’s particular homeless

status is defined as one who is in an area without the absolute intention of staying for at least six months and who has no fixed residence in the local area.

The indicators used to measure the concept of traveling homeless young adult are the self-reporting of the individuals interviewed. Since no background check is run, nor official identifying documentation required, there is no particular way to insure the veracity of individuals' claims to be traveling homeless young adult/ homeless veterans, except their own statements. Since the purpose of the research is to gain an understanding of the self-perception of these populations, the potential inaccuracies in the self reporting of the populations in question must be understood, while also understanding the importance of achieving a non-coerced narrative.

Several other concepts were important in creating our interviewing tool and in analyzing our data. These concepts are personal storyline, deviant lifestyle, systemic needs and criminalized homelessness.

Personal storyline is defined as one's subjective understanding of the set of events and circumstances that have led to the subject being in his or her current state.

Deviant lifestyle, a difficult concept to define succinctly, will be defined for this research, according to Adler and Adler (2006), as being a lifestyle that incorporates "attitudes, behaviors or conditions" that involve "violations of social norms" (p. 13).

Systemic needs are defined as the understanding one has of his/ her needs, and the availability of the agencies within the social system which exist to meet those needs, as well as if, and with what result, the individual has accessed such agencies.

The concept of criminalized homelessness is defined as community enacted legislation which prohibits people from engaging in basic life-sustaining activities in public, or the specific actions on the part of law enforcement agents that would make an individual feel as though they are being viewed as criminal. Examples of such criminalization would be laws which keep people from sleeping in parks and vehicles, loitering in front of/near businesses, and engaging in street performances (work).

Data Gathering

The two primary researchers gathered data in the field directly, through in depth interviews with subjects sampled purposively, as discussed above. Several procedural considerations were attended to in every interview administration.

First the researchers ensured that the potential subject was approached in a public space in order to minimize danger to both subject and researcher. Early in the data gathering one researcher experienced implied threats of violence on his person while approaching a group of apparently homeless young adults in Redwood Park in Arcata. Such potential issues were avoided thereafter by approaching those individuals that were in public spaces around town exclusively. We can look at this as respecting the private spaces of the subjects, as data showed that many homeless traveling young adults take up temporary residence in the Redwood Park area.

Secondly the researchers had some material good to offer, in accordance with the principle of beneficence, to potential subjects. With homeless veterans a pamphlet with information on local services available to veterans was provided to subjects. For the homeless traveling young adults either sandwiches or a small monetary compensation was offered.

Finally the researchers made sure not to appear as though they were recording data in an overly obtrusive way. In early interviews digital recorders were used, but at no time was photographic evidence or identifying personal data collected on any subject. As it suited the application of our measurement tool, eventually hand written notes sufficed to gather the necessary data and even the digital recorder was left out of interviews. In some part, this was to limit the perception by subjects that the researchers were affiliated with any authoritarian organization.

Information Safeguards

Any information relating to the identity of the subjects under study will remain confidential. If a subject gives the researcher his or her name, this information will not be recorded in the transcript, nor used anywhere in discussion of the data.

The raw data will be held by the researchers for a period of three years after the end of the Humboldt State University Fall semester, which ends 15 December 2008. Tapes, transcripts, and any other material related to the study, excluding the hard and digital copies of the completed study that is submitted to the university, are held in safekeeping at the researcher's homes, again, for no more than three years. The method of destruction for the materials after the three years expire, is by incineration, digital data is deleted.

Risks/Benefits to Participants

The risk to the subjects involved in the study is minimal to none. The subjects are not required to answer all, or any of the questions. Also see Informed Consent form. (p. 74) Particular risk is related to potential psychological discomfort when potential lines of questioning may bring up unpleasant feelings or memories. Similarly, emotional discomfort may result from some lines of questioning or even from a desire to terminate the interview process or displeasure with said process.

Benefits to the participants are both immediately manifested and more general. Individuals are offered either a bus pass or several dollars for their time and participation in the research at the time of being interviewed. As well the research itself seeks to bring a greater understanding of the study populations to the general public, and with that a potential for more positive outcomes in interactions with homeless services and the public. No guarantee or specific probability of these more general benefits can really be offered, and so some small immediate material compensation is offered as well as stated above.

Ethical Considerations

The researcher focusing on interviewing homeless traveling young adults enlisted the help of a female colleague in order to create a sense of ease among potential subjects that had been largely unwilling to participate in the research when approached by the single male researcher. This brought up ethical issues in our minds relating to the potential issue of coercing the subjects by playing to their fears or assumptions about the

social situation in which the interviews occurred. The decision was made to go ahead and incorporate the female colleague into the interviewing process due to the fact that no attempt was being made to bias the data gathered, and the only coercion was intended to offset a sense of mistrust with a sense of ease.

When interviewing homeless veteran subjects the researchers encountered individuals expressing a willingness to have identifying information discussed in the research. An ethical decision was made to leave this information out because we felt that it would be inappropriate to incorporate any information in our discussion that could potentially bring any sort of negative consequences to any participant.

When interviewing individual subjects the issue of inebriation came up several times. If a subject is inebriated the data gathered may be garbled, may not accurately reflect the subject's sober experience, may be other than a sober subject would willingly discuss, or may be untrue. A decision was made to expunge the data of several subjects that were clearly inebriated, and to keep several others. These decisions were made according to the acknowledgement of inebriation by individuals as well as the apparent quality of data gathered. If the subject admitted he was inebriated and the data seemed applicable to the research it was incorporated.

Methodological Issues

Several particular issues that impacted the quality of the data gathered and the overall quality of this research project related to our methodology are discussed below.

This research was designed, data was gathered and a final analysis was developed over the course of twelve weeks. The actual data gathering, which involved trial and error with a high rate of failure among early attempts, lasted approximately four weeks. A significantly longer time frame of one year would have greatly improved our ability to collect data and would have potentially led to the gathering of data amenable to more truly generalizable conclusions.

The researchers received no training in interviewing before or during the research. This significantly hampered the quality and volume of data gathered. Incorporating trained interviewers into the methodology, or training for the researchers in interviewing, would have significantly reduced the issue of low volume and quality of data.

In the field we experienced issues relating to the transience of our population. In attempting to “snowball” our sample size, we occasionally were told of a location to access another subject, but the subject would have already moved on before we got there. As well in looking at the transient panhandling population there were individuals we were unable to locate at times we were gathering data even though we knew of their existence. An extended time frame would have ameliorated this issue to an extent, but because this transience is largely definitional to being homeless, the problem could not be entirely removed.

Another methodological issue, which pertains to information gathering from homeless veterans only, is whether or not the researcher felt as if the subject may be too inebriated to be interviewed successfully. An example of such a situation occurred during the interview of homeless veteran subject #3. While the subject agreed to be interviewed, and appeared to be coherent, the situation quickly changed when the subject became belligerent and tightly grabbed the researchers arm. After being convinced to release the researcher, the researcher announced the interview was over. However, the subject had answered a few questions, and the subjects’ partial information is included in the data write-up.

All of the methodological preparation and considerations involved in this project came together as we went into the field to collect our data. The sample size was small ($n=9$ for homeless traveling young adults, and $n=10$ for homeless veterans), and so our data is largely presented in the form of proportions rather than percentages. We do not want to give the impression that we have such vast stores of data available to us that we can create significant statistical analyses, or that we can come to grand generalizable truths. These are not, after all, the goals of an exploratory study.

The data we present for discussion here takes the form of descriptions of some trends and correlations that may have a significant existence at the population level, but which we present here merely as interesting avenues for further research. With that we can move into our discussion of the data collected.

Discussion

The data gathered in this research is presented in tables below. The tables present the various data for both the homeless veterans (referred to as veterans in the following discussion) and the homeless traveling young adults (referred to as travelers below) side by side for comparison. While this is an exploratory study, and the findings generally cannot be asserted as statistically significant or as demonstrably causative, we attempt to present a discussion of each piece of data related to the other data as well as the theories that informed our research to suggest possible correlations and causal relationships in the data that could be borne out in further research.

The two groups interviewed for this research provided a wide range of answers on some of the topics discussed, and on others provided a narrower range of responses more amenable to analysis according to generalizable trends and categorization. Each main topic of discussion's data will be laid out first, and then a discussion of connections between different points and emergent trends and categories will follow.

Topic 1: History

Area A: Location of Origin

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Western States	2	7
Central States	1	1
Eastern States	6	2

The data in the above table represents the fact that many of the traveling young adults that show up in the Arcata and Eureka areas come from far away to get here. At the same time, as we will see from other pieces of data, four of the nine individuals

interviewed were in the area more or less by chance. They happened to be traveling across the country and this happened to be the moment at which their travels brought them into Humboldt County, and through Arcata and Eureka.

The two individuals that were from the western region of the US were from Portland, Oregon and Pismo Beach, California. The woman from Pismo Beach was traveling through the area for marijuana trimming work and to visit a parent who now lives in the area. The other individual was here “on vacation” from his living situation in Portland which had recently become “crazy.” He was heading home though as he had recently experienced theft of some of his possessions by other individuals staying in Redwood Park.

Two of the individuals from the eastern region of the US were in the area to work temporarily trimming marijuana, and were aware of the job opportunities through friends living in the area. Of the other eastern individuals two were simply visiting friends in the area on their travels, and two were simply traveling and happened to be in the area. While two of the individuals just mentioned had a purpose in being in the area, they were oriented simply to being with their friends as opposed to consciously deciding they wanted to spend time in Arcata or Eureka.

The individual from the state of Texas was traveling with his friend, the subject from Oregon, and was only in the area because he was traveling as part of a group. He did not intend to stay long. Without more data it is difficult to ascertain whether the lack of individuals traveling through the area from the central US region is a significant trend, or if we just happened to miss the others.

As the table above indicates, the location of origin for the homeless veterans is quite contradictory to the homeless young traveler location of origin. Due to the fact that veterans tend to join the military in one location, serve their time, then relocate back to their original location due to the military only paying to move the member back to their original home of record, it is not surprising that many of the homeless veterans interviewed in the Eureka/Arcata areas originated from the Western states.

The two homeless veterans that stated they originated from the Eastern region of the United States, subject #5 from Pennsylvania, and subject #10 from Florida, had both returned to their location of origin after completing their military service. Much as the

homeless traveling young adults who were in the local area by chance, so too were homeless veteran's #5 and #10. Both claimed to have been traveling for a short period of time before arriving into the Eureka/Arcata areas.

Unlike homeless veterans #5 and #10, homeless veteran #7 indicated that he had migrated to the area from Michigan on a job lead, only to be denied the job upon arrival. Interestingly, this subject was the youngest homeless veteran (27 years old), and was only one of two homeless veterans interviewed that were in transitional housing situations. Homeless veteran #7 stated that he would only be in the area until his time in transitional housing expired, then he would probably migrate back to Michigan.

Of the homeless veterans interviewed, six of them migrated from the Western states: #4 and #8 from Oregon, #1 and #2 from the San Francisco Bay areas, and #9 from Southern California. Again, illustrating that veterans tend to migrate back to their home of record upon completion of military service, all six subjects had originated in either California, or Oregon, prior to their migration to the Eureka/Arcata area.

Area B: Family Size

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Single Parent Household	2	2
Two parent Household	7	8

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
No Siblings	4	2
One Sibling	2	3
Two Siblings	2	3
Three or more Siblings	1	2

Family Members Including Subject	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
2	2	1
3	2	1
4	2	4
5+	3	4

With the limited data available to us there is not much to draw from this information. The majority of individuals came from what is generally still considered a “normal” family structure, one with two parents. This simply points away from family structure as a causative factor in individuals becoming traveling homeless young adults, or homeless veterans. As well, members of both groups came from a reasonably diverse background of family sizes, with no particular family size claiming a majority.

In retrospect, asking the subjects about their parent’s marital status may have yielded a category that may have shown a relationship between the homeless young adults and the possibility of having been raised in a household with step-parents. In interviews conducted with homeless veterans, the researcher noticed no statements related to the possibility of the veteran having been raised with step-parents, although consistently a majority of the homeless veterans stated that one, if not both of their parents were deceased. This fact is not surprising considering the generational gaps between the homeless young adults and the homeless veterans; Many of the homeless veterans interviewed stated their ages as being in the late 50’s to early 60’s, which would presumably place them at, or above, the age of the homeless young adult’s parents.

With regards to siblings, one homeless veteran stated that he grew up with nine siblings, and another grew up with seven siblings. We, the researchers, believe that since no homeless young adults stated having as many siblings, this fact also points to the generational gap. Many of the homeless veterans grew up in the 1950’s and 1960’s, which was a time when many immediate families were much larger than those of the late 1980’s and early 1990’s.

Area C: Parent's Education

	Travelers' Parents Yes College	Travelers' Parents No College	Veterans' Parents Yes College	Veterans' Parents No College
Mom	7	2	2	8
Dad	6	3	4	6
Both	5	1	2	6

While the family structure did not seem to point toward any notable generalities among the homeless traveler population, there may well be a correlation between having parents with a college education and deciding to become a traveler. Of course, we know of many individuals with two, college educated parents that have not become travelers, so the relationship would be just one factor among many leading acting on the decision to take part in this lifestyle. Still this discovery seems to defy conventional wisdom regarding homeless individuals.

Having two parents with college educations implies a middle class or above socio-economic status, and this would imply that a child would generally have more access to the opportunities that would grant access to resources to avoid homelessness. Of course we also know from interviewing these individuals that their homeless status is not always perceived as such, and that it is generally a choice for this group. The choice seems to be motivated by some degree of ideology, and having educated parents may create an intellectual environment growing up that fosters this sort of ideological development. This potential causative connection would make for some very interesting further research.

In following the ideological thread, perhaps the dramatic differences between the college attainment levels of the parent of the two homeless subpopulations can be explained by a shift in the ideology, within American culture over time, of college being necessary to improve one's life chances in the ability to move up the socioeconomic ladder.

Again, reflecting on the generational gap between the two subpopulations under study, we can extrapolate the generational gap to the parents of our subjects. With

regards to the parents of almost all homeless veterans in this study, who grew up presumably in the 1930's and 1940's, which was a time in history when college was not necessarily available to anyone that desired a degree beyond high school. By no means is the lack of college educated parents a precursor to homelessness, but the possibility exists that for the homeless veterans, a parental lack of college experience may have been a reason they themselves chose to join the military shortly after high school, instead of attending college.

Topic 2: Family Relationship

Area A: Quality of Relationship

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Positive	8	3
Obligatory	1	0
Negative	0	6

This particular data was not in line with our initial expectations. At some level we suspected, in line with the theories of youth subcultures discussed above, that individuals would make the decision to take on the identity of a homeless traveler due to conflict with family groups, as families are the most recent primary socializing forces in the lives of young adults, and subcultures arise from collectively perceived conflicts with the dominant culture, the families, here, being a representative thereof. Two individuals interviewed said that relationships with their families had improved since they had been traveling, that getting away from family had helped to relieve stresses of the past. The rest of the individuals with positive relationships said that they were “close” or “very close” to their parents.

This suggests another potential correlation between family and the developing of an ideology compatible with the identity of a homeless traveler. Having a close relationship with educated, and presumably middle class, parents may help to create an environment conducive to an individual feeling it appropriate to take on this role. Further research into this subject would be informative. The one individual considering herself to have an obligatory relationship said that her family is “blood” with her and that she had

to love them. She qualified further that she got along all right with her parents, she just objected to their “consumerist” lifestyle. The description of her relationship with her family as obligatory had more to do with ideological differences than with some more personal conflict. This individual maintained “once or twice a week” contact with her parents. This points, again, to the ideological nature of the decision to pursue a traveling lifestyle for the travelers.

The homeless veterans differed dramatically in their quality of relationships with family. Unlike the homeless travelers, who were quite younger overall, and had a majority of positive relationships with their families, the majority of homeless veterans stated negative familial relationships. This observation was in line with our initial expectations of homeless person family relationships; however, as stated above, the results for the homeless young traveler did not meet such expectations.

The majority of homeless veterans expressed having “burned” the bridges, so to speak, which connected them to their immediate family members. As the literature suggests, homeless persons may feel anomic in their situation, and the negative family relationship may add significantly to the feeling of being outside societal norms.

An important aspect to consider, since the two subpopulations under study are quite different in age, is that perhaps the homeless veterans once had the overwhelmingly positive familial relationships expressed by the homeless young travelers. As the homeless veterans were much older than the homeless young travelers, some veterans stated that their parents were deceased, so the only relationship with primary family members would have been with that of siblings. An example of a deteriorated family relationship was given by homeless veteran subject #1, and he stated, “My parents are dead, so I used to live with my sister. She couldn’t take my in and out of homeless shit no more, so she threw me out too”. The subject suggested that the only way to mend the relationship with his sister, and to regain contact, was for him to get a job and to become a stable member of society.

Of course, as stated, the travelers were considerably younger than the homeless veterans, and of course the travelers had been homeless for a significantly lesser time. The homeless veterans, who on average had been homeless for approximately six years, had much more time in order for their families to grow weary of their homeless state.

Area B: Rate of Contact with Family

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Constant (once a week or more)	6	1
Periodic (once a year to once a week)	3	3
Never	0	6

This data also deviated from what we expected initially. For one thing the increasing ubiquity of the cell phone culture has permeated even the traveling homeless culture. The three individuals considering themselves to be “crusties,” or individuals associated with a punk rock culture based on an opposition to a consumerist dominant society which they perceive and reject, all had personal cell phones paid for by their families exclusively for the purpose of staying in touch. And these three individuals all maintained constant contact with their families (we define this as once a week or more often). This data on the rate of contact with families seems to have the strongest correlation with the idea that traveling homeless young adults have an ideological basis for their decision to be homeless. They explicitly reject a “consumerist” culture while they carry around, and utilize on a regular basis, high tech commodities that are ubiquitous with the very culture they speak out openly against.

The number of veterans that never contact their families is mirrored by the above information related to the quality of relationship the veterans expressed having with their families. Of course, if a person has a negative relationship with a family member, they are less likely to have any contact with that family member. The only veteran to express constant contact was the youngest veteran interviewed (27 years old). This veteran stated that he pays for the cell phone himself, and that his mother wished for him to contact her weekly in order for her to know that he was doing well.

The three homeless veterans whom stated periodic contact with family did so only once a year, and again, such contact was only made to let the family know their whereabouts and that they were doing well.

A majority of veterans stated that they never contact their families, and some added statements which suggested that they (veterans) had exhausted such familial relationships due to previous attempts to either receive housing or financial assistance from family members. One stated that he had no family to contact, and as was the case with veteran #4, he chose not to subject his family to his lifestyle.

Topic 3: Homeless Status

Area A: Self Identification as Homeless

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Yes	2	10
No	7	0

When we look at the homeless travelers alone it is interesting to see the extent to which these individuals, while easily meeting the definition of being homeless we use in this research, do not self identify as such. Rather terms like “home free” or “structurally challenged” are used. Even upon probing with questions like “Does that mean homeless to you?” the response is negative. When compared to the universal assent to the self identity of being homeless among veterans we see yet more evidence of the ideological nature of the homeless traveler situation.

These individuals are living homeless. They have no certain access to shelter and none have a local permanent residence. The sleeping situation of these individuals runs the gamut from sleeping on the couches of local friends to sleeping in the bushes of Redwood Park. Yet these individuals do not identify with the idea of being homeless. Possible reasons that occur to us are that these individuals have ready access to a family that will provide for their needs in case of emergency, a denial based on ideological constructions that deny the empirical reality of their situations, or that the individuals may be “passing” as homeless travelers when they are in fact not.

As the table states, all ten of the homeless veterans interviewed defined themselves as being homeless. Interestingly, even the two subjects whom resided in transitional housing acknowledged being homeless, technically. Both subjects within the

transitional housing were aware that such a housing arrangement was temporary, and that they were still technically homeless.

Through the conversations with the homeless veterans, I gathered that a majority of them identified themselves as homeless not only because of the realities of their situation, but also in order to be able to utilize certain homeless services offered up by the Arcata Endeavor and the North Coast Veterans Resource Center. As is discussed within the literature review, most homeless service agencies are only able to help individuals once they are officially homeless. Subject #7 suggested, as did others, that “home is where the heart is, whether you’re on the street, or in a house, but I know that regardless of what I consider to be a home, I am still branded as being homeless”.

Area B: Length of Homelessness

No Applicable Table

The length of homelessness question asked within the questionnaire seemed more applicable to the homeless veteran population. The average amount of time spent homeless was approximately 6.3 years for the veterans. It is important to note that there were outlying responses to the question; One subject stated that he had been homeless for approximately eighteen years, and another stated he had been homeless for approximately twenty years. Excluding these outliers, the approximate time the veterans spent homeless ranged from a few months to a few years.

Area C: Job Status

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Has Some Employment	5	1
Jobless	4	9

We found it interesting that the travelers seemed to be in touch with the local black market economy even though none are local. Four of the five travelers with some employment were in town during this season’s marijuana harvest to work as trimmers, or “to do landscaping work” as they often put it. The interviewer did not probe into this situation for fear of putting off the potentially skittish subject by asking for repeated

verbal confirmation of illegal activities, and so no data was gathered on how each individual came to know when and where to go to find this work. From an economic standpoint, the individuals here temporarily to do black market labor are likely to take the money they make and travel on, thus effectively taking money out of the local economy, in whatever small amount.

The one non-marijuana related employment situation among the travelers involved a young man who could “find some sort of work” in “most places” he traveled. He used a car as his primary means of transportation, and he said that he was a hard worker and could find menial labor everywhere he went. The truth of this statement may have been exaggerated somewhat as he was interviewed while panhandling on a street corner on G Street in Arcata.

Of the homeless veterans interviewed, nine were technically jobless, although two of the nine stated receiving small Social Security Disability (SSD) payments. The two veterans who received such payments stated that if they were to take a job, even a very low paying job that would not pay as much as they are receiving in SSD payments, then they would be exempted from receiving such SSD payments.

A few of the veterans expressed interest in pursuing disability claims through the Department of Veterans Affairs, but they also expressed disinterest in having to fill out all the paperwork and chase down the information necessary to make such a claim. Many of those expressing such interest believed the “system” is set up in such a way as to make the pursuit of such a claim so difficult that many will not follow through with the process.

The only homeless veteran to claim having some employment stated that such employment was in the form of temporary jobs. The subject believes that he has a personality disorder which is the cause of his inability to gain full time employment. Again, as with the aforementioned veterans interested in pursuing disability claims, the subject believed that completing the process of official mental diagnosis, coupled with the process of claiming such a disability, would be all but impossible.

In comparing the two populations of veterans and travelers we can see that the travelers, while transient by definition, consider themselves to be employed at a greater rate than the veterans. Any number of factors likely come together to keep veterans unemployed, but this status likely reinforces the veterans’ self identification as homeless,

as even veterans with some degree of access to regular shelter self-identified as homeless. On the other hand we have the travelers who seem to largely not consider themselves to be homeless, and being employed to an extent might help to legitimate that self identity. One traveler who considered herself homeless had some employment, while the other did not.

Topic 4: Native Status

Area A: Native versus Migratory

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Local	0	1
Migrated to Area	9	9

Of the subjects interviewed, four were in the area more by chance than by design. They claimed to have been just traveling around the west coast and this was their most recent stop. By the same token there was a general consensus among all the subjects interviewed that this area has a positive local community and that they enjoyed the nature and the ease of existing as a traveler here. One subject mentioned above was actually looking for permanent work to become able to settle in the area because he enjoyed his experience here so much, even though his initial trip here was more or less by chance.

Of the five remaining subjects, those that came here by design, four were in the area for temporary work trimming marijuana and one was traveling through to visit a local woman he had met elsewhere during his travels. Those here for work were here in a strictly temporary capacity and the individuals interviewed as a group all expressed the same positive attitudes toward the local community and nature as the four individuals coming through the area by chance. And as the above table shows, all individuals traveling through were not local to the area.

Of the homeless veteran population, only one was believed to be local in origin. Defining the subject as local is problematic in that it was not he, himself, that stated he was from the local area, but it was a few of the homeless persons around him that claimed he was local. Where this situation becomes problematic is at the point that I, the researcher, felt the subject was too inebriated to conduct the interview any further. I had

just arrived at the question of native, or migratory status, when the interview fell apart. I chose, however, to include the statements by the other homeless persons, as indicating the subject was a native to the area. I did not, however, consider any other statements from any of the other individuals present during the interview, as they related to the subject in question.

Of the nine homeless veterans whom stated that they had migrated to the Eureka/Arcata areas, the responses as to why they had migrated to the area varied. A few had come to the area for the climate and woodland beauty, while others had come in pursuit of girlfriends and ex-wives, with the ex-wives being in custody of the subject's children. One subject stated that he had migrated to the area on a job lead, but that the lead proved fruitless, and here he was, jobless and homeless.

Area B: Traveling Group

	Number of Travelers
Alone	2
With Friend	4
With Group (3 or more total)	3

It is interesting among the travelers that the individuals that most strongly identified themselves as members of a particular group, even a subgroup of travelers, were the members of a group of three travelers, traveling together, that defined themselves individually as "crusties." This group identity seemed natural, as all three expressed it, and not in any manner that appeared as what one might call showboating or being a braggart. The identity had to do with musical taste, costuming and, according to these individuals, their primary mode of transportation (they rode freight trains).

The individuals traveling alone or with a single friend were generally more "straight" looking, or had demeanors that conformed more or less with the norms of our society. These individuals had a smaller immediately available support structure, and so being able to blend in with the local culture to gain access to resources or sociability likely held a greater degree of importance to them. The group of crusties, on the other

hand, seemed more able to afford the cost of bucking the norms of society in a group and also had the ability to constantly recreate and empower the shared meaning they attributed to their subcultural affiliation through constant interaction. This fits with some of the informal data collected simply by watching these individuals interact with one another. They did a lot of informal touching, as well as using affectionate nicknames for one another that established group identity (names like “patches” or “bird”) and reinforced it.

We, the researchers, did not feel the category of traveling group applied as directly to the homeless veterans as it did towards the homeless traveling young adults. All of the homeless veterans interviewed stated that they had traveled to the Eureka/Arcata areas alone. Perhaps the homeless veteran traveling alone is an example of the solitary deviance discussion within the literature review; the homeless veterans may not have wanted any more attention drawn to themselves, so by traveling alone, their visibility was reduced.

Area C: Anticipated Length of Time Staying in Area

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Weeks	5	0
Months	3	0
Permanent	1	9

It is clear that except for one who was considering settling down and ending his travels here, the travelers did not consider staying in the area for any significant period of time. On the other hand the homeless veterans, due to lack of resources, a desire to maintain access to the local community, or other reasons, were not planning to leave the area.

Considering the apparent ideological nature of the travelers’ decision to maintain their lifestyles, it would seem that experiences would be possible that could disrupt the smooth functioning of ideology in their minds leading to a decision to leave the lifestyle behind. Considering the interactional basis of a coherent world-view, the fact that meaning can only be maintained through relatively continual successful interaction with

others in which the view is successfully reinforced, it would stand to reason that if a traveler were to have a sufficient amount of interaction with other travelers having different particular ideological orientations toward their lifestyle, and were to simultaneously take part in a sufficient quantity of positive interactions with non-travelers living more “normal” lifestyles, that a traveler’s particular ideology could be broken down leading to a decision to settle down in area and reintegrate into the normalized social patterns of society.

Of course there are numerous other reasons an traveler could decide to settle down, and our data really points toward none of them, but it would make for an interesting study to see what reasons ex-travelers attribute to their leaving the lifestyle. As well such information could point to more effective means of helping to re-normalize individuals in such deviant lifestyles into the routines of the dominant culture.

All of the homeless veterans interviewed expressed interest in making the Eureka/Arcata areas their permanent location of residence, although the subject who appeared to be too inebriated to continue the interview did not respond to the question. Although situations and circumstances could arise which may cause some, if not all, of the veteran subjects to migrate out of the area, none specified any pressing need to leave any time soon.

The issue of affordable housing came up often among the veterans, and many expressed a desire for such housing, which they believed would make the decision to leave the area more difficult due to the possibility of not finding such housing elsewhere.

Many veterans were asked if their intention, from their arrival, was to reside in the local area indefinitely. Most responses to the question were negative, with many veterans stating that they had just planned to blow through town if “things” didn’t work out. Although the question was not on the list of questions to be asked, and the responses not included in any data tables, we find it interesting that the homeless traveling young adults tend to stick to their plan of a short stay in the area, but the homeless veterans, with the same original intention, ended up staying in the area.

Topic 5: Deviance

Area A: Self Perception of Deviance

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Yes	0	2
No	9	7

This data went against the suppositions we had before collecting any data. It was expected that most of the homeless individuals researched would consider themselves deviant, and that, among the travelers, some would relish this title. The crusties we interviewed costumed themselves and took on mannerisms that seemed to be designed to run counter to the norms of the dominant society. Such non-normative behavior was flaunted in front of the researcher in a public space with no apparent shame or remorse. One could surmise that these individuals, then, were acting out consciously in a manner deviant relative to society. When questioned about it, not a single traveler asserted that they were in fact deviant, or living a deviant lifestyle.

Of the homeless veterans, only two identified themselves as being deviant, but it is important to note that they only accepted the deviant label because they believed that society deemed them as such, so why shouldn't they accept the label. The seven veteran subjects whom did not consider themselves to be deviant, also believed that society had labeled them as deviant, but they refused to take on the label of deviant themselves.

As homeless veteran subject #2 stated, "I am not a deviant, but I am around a lot of deviants". Homeless veteran #1 stated that "Society is criminal. I was kicked out of the COOP because my EBT card had no money on it, and they thought I was trying to get my stuff for free". What we surmise with regards to veteran #1's situation at the COOP, is that he appeared to look like a homeless person, was using an EBT card, and the fact that the card had no value left on it, he was labeled a deviant and criminalized by the store staff in that he was asked to leave the premises for having done nothing wrong.

This data suggests the existence of ideology and the existence and constant recreation of a shared set of values and meanings within the population of travelers that helps to normalize their seemingly deviant behavior in their own minds. The travelers are

thereby able to take part in meaningful and subversive activities through which they find a positive self-conception in spite of their subversion of the dominant norms of society.

Through creating shared meaning in a joint action, the crusties maintain their particular reality. The creation of a subculture, with its own particular cultural roles and meanings, helps the crusties to maintain a positive sense of self in the face of an occasionally hostile, and ideologically antagonistic dominant society.

For the homeless veterans, some may be made to pay the price for the indiscretions of the homeless persons that have preceded them. Again, the homeless veterans appeared to be going through their society deemed deviance in solitude, with no identified group membership with which to withdraw to, and no such affiliation to help them maintain a positive sense of self. We will see in looking at the next set of data and some particular data gathered in interviews that the travelers, and the crusties especially, face social sanction for their identities. Ideology and interactions within their subculture help these individuals maintain a positive sense of self while existing somewhat outside of the dominant society.

Area B: Society Perceives as Deviant

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Yes	6	9
No	3	0

This data, while insufficient to make any serious claims, suggests that the travelers may have a more positive and resilient sense of self than the homeless veterans do. One third of the travelers actually denied that society saw them as deviant. This denial was always qualified in the same basic manner. “Society doesn’t actually know how I live, and so they can’t call me deviant.” That is a paraphrasing of the same statement I heard from several different and unrelated individuals. When we talk of the anomie experienced by homeless individuals, it seems that these travelers may be able to hold onto such an ideological perspective that they actually feel fully normalized in their lifestyle.

Of the individuals claiming to not be seen as deviant, one travels in his own car and routinely takes part in manual labor wherever he goes, another only travels where he has friends and manages to never have to sleep on the streets, and the third expressed very strong sentiments regarding the fact that a judgmental society “doesn’t know” him. The last individual there was also one that spoke out harshly and repeatedly against the “destructive” nature of the “consumer society” we inhabit. The individuals claiming to be seen as non-deviant by society were able to do so in part because they are able either to maintain a set of behaviors that they identify as “normal” in the mainstream sense (i.e. finding work and having a car, or staying off the streets) or because they maintain a strong ideological belief that the dominant society misunderstands them and is itself deviant.

Among those individuals that did believe society sees them as deviant there was a general expression of dismissal toward the fact. Society sees them as deviant, but they don’t attribute much value to this belief. There was a common thread, particularly strong in the group of crusties and the two hitchhikers heading to Portland, Oregon, that the dominant society is “consumerist” and “destructive” toward the natural environment, and that these are negative traits. So there is an acknowledgement that society disapproves of the traveler’s lifestyle, but this society is ideologically discounted in spite of the fact that it provides many material resources directly and indirectly to these travelers. In order to maintain a positive sense of self and to avoid entering into an anomic state these individuals create a set of beliefs that legitimates their deviant lifestyles and in some cases even creates a non-deviant internal identity.

Comparing the experience of the travelers to the veterans here we can see that the veterans have a much less positive self-image. Possibly due to the long term nature of their experience of homelessness, possibly due to their generally being older and having a more firmly established sense of self, and possibly due to their lack of access to family and other social resources that provide the means to a route out of homelessness, the veterans tend to be less willing to perceive themselves as deviant. As well they are even more willing to accept the apparent fact that society sees them as deviant, although many expressed that, at the micro level, they did not care what society thinks of them. At the macro level, the homeless veterans realize that societies opinions of them, as homeless

persons, directly affects how society acts towards them. This points toward the fact that the older homeless veterans have a less positive community to interact with, to create and recreate a positive sense of self with, than do the travelers. Consequently it seems that the homeless veterans are likely to experience a greater degree of anomie than the travelers. This idea seems to be supported by the very limited data provided in this research.

Topic 6: Criminalization

Area A: Ideology

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Believes society criminalizes homelessness	9	9
Doesn't believe society criminalizes homelessness	0	0

This data suggests that the homeless veterans and travelers share an ideological perspective that says the homeless are treated criminally by society. Among the travelers there was a common thread of individuals pointing out that their very lifestyle was illegal according to society. It is illegal to sleep in public, it is illegal to urinate or defecate in public, in some places it is illegal to sit down on curbs or in storefronts, individuals are harassed in some places for panhandling, and it is illegal to sleep in a car in a public space.

For the crusties and the hitchhikers headed to Portland, Oregon, the fact of their perception of criminalization of their lifestyle reinforced the negative perception they held of the dominant society generally. One crusty suggested that they are criminalized for not taking part in the consumerism of society, for not “buying the new trendy shorts” that come out each year and for rather “taking something from a dumpster and making it [her] own.” As we’ve seen already, this belief that society is “consumerist”, and that this is bad, helps these individuals to maintain a positive self image as they subvert the norms of this perceived immoral, if dominant, society.

As for the homeless veterans, almost all were aware of the city ordinances which are directed at the homeless population. All of the homeless veterans interviewed

believed that such laws were meant to keep them out of the public eye. Homeless veteran #2 stated that, “The public doesn’t want to see us. We remind some of them of just how close they themselves are to being homeless, so create more laws, homelessness will disappear, right”. Homeless veteran #2 made the most profound statement regarding the criminalization of the homeless; “Society should be trying to integrate the homeless into the community, not trying to push us further away through silly laws”.

Area B: Criminalization Experience

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Has experienced criminalization as homeless individual	2	5
Has not experienced criminalization as homeless individual	7	4

It is interesting that most of the travelers have not experienced criminalization themselves, although all believe criminalization of the homeless occurs and all had heard stories of criminalization experiences. Part of this may stem from the fact that the travelers are not usually in one place long enough to attract the eye of any particular police organization. Several travelers expressed a general desire to “keep a low profile” and avoid the scrutiny of the police. One individual avoided accessing the services of the Endeavor in Arcata for fear of coming under the gaze of authority.

The two individuals interviewed that were traveling by car and panhandling in town each expressed the idea that by staying “aware” of the situations they were in and by “looking normal” they could avoid running into problems with authority. This information points toward the idea, again of the use of ideology to avoid cognitive dissonance insofar as this population denies that they are deviant, sometimes even denying that society looks at them as deviant, and yet has a conscious set of plans and behaviors utilized to avoid being noticed by the authorities. One might presume that if an

individual was not behaving in a deviant manner, that the authorities would not care to look out for them.

The veterans' higher rate of criminalization experience likely has to do with the fact that they have both been homeless longer, and are a more permanent fixture in the community. They are around long enough to be noticed by the authorities, and for the authorities to develop conceptions of them as individuals deserving, or not deserving of sanction.

Of the homeless veterans who had themselves experienced criminalization due to their homelessness, all were cited by the authorities for either public intoxication, illegal camping, sleeping in cars, or petty theft. All but the petty theft can be explained by their homeless condition. How many of us admit to getting drunk behind the walls of our domiciles, then falling asleep in our beds? For the homeless, due to not having a domicile, if one wants to get drunk, it will probably be in public. As far as going to sleep, whether drunk, or not, for the homeless the choice is again to do it in a public place. We, the researchers, were made aware of a city ordinance within Eureka, CA which prohibits one from sleeping in a car (or R.V.) that is parked on the street. Homeless veteran #1 stated being cited for sleeping in his R.V., was told to move on continuously, until he ran out of gas, and was then cited for being in one parking spot over the allotted time. We believe that veteran subject #1 provided ample anecdotal evidence as to the criminalization of homeless people.

Topic 7: Services

Area A: Awareness

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Aware of local services	5	10
Not aware of local services	4	0

Part of the reason that travelers may not be well aware of the services available is that they are traveling and are therefore not necessarily eligible for services (not being local residents). As well they may not be in town for long enough to learn of the services available. There may also be more ideological reasons that services are not known about

and are avoided by the travelers, and we will look at these in discussing the next table below.

The homeless veterans stated unanimously that they had been made aware of local service agencies through word of mouth. Unlike the homeless young travelers, the homeless veterans interviewed have been in the area long enough to take advantage of the services as they see fit. As well, a few of the homeless veterans were made aware of other agencies, which assist homeless veterans, through the initial agency they contacted, which was usually the Arcata Endeavor. Through snowballing, a few of the veterans were made aware of even more homeless aid agencies which have services directed at the homeless veteran specifically.

Area B: Access

	Number of Travelers	Number of Veterans
Has accessed local services	3	9
Has not accessed local services	6	1

Area C: Homeless Veterans Aware of Homeless Veteran's Programs

	Number of Veterans
Aware of such programs	6
Not aware of such programs	3

Most of the travelers expressed a desire to avoid utilizing the services because they were emblematic of the society which the travelers rejected. To access the services available to homeless people would be to admit that they were homeless. To accept a label of homelessness would be to accept a low social status relevant to the dominant society. Several individual travelers expressed that they could get food and water when they needed it, and that they didn't need access to shelters. In general, though we cannot make any specific causal statements here, the travelers seem to avoid the services available in the community because they value an identity of independence that would be

impinged on by going through the bureaucratic steps necessary to access public services. Still, these individuals get their sustenance from somewhere, and that somewhere is in this society. If avoiding dependence on society is part of the traveler's subculture, then there must be an ideological basis for this cultural belief because a cursory look at how the travelers get their sustenance shows that it is provided by society no matter by what circuits.

For the homeless veterans interviewed, there was no ideology stated that led the researchers to believe that the veterans felt they were "owed" anything for their military service. The primary services accessed, as stated by the veterans, were the ones offered up by St. Vincent DePaul in Eureka, and the Arcata Endeavor in Arcata. With regards to the veteran's medical needs, a few utilized the Veteran's Affairs clinic in Eureka, but by no means did a majority of the veterans use this service. For the veterans, utilization of many of the homeless services, specifically directed at homeless veterans, is contingent upon reams of paperwork being filled out, military documents being received, and of course, follow-up on every last detail of said paperwork. For many of the veterans, the personal responsibility involved in following through with such a process is just too demanding. Consider that the homeless veteran is involved in daily survival strategies as a homeless individual, and then try to add to the day multiple appointments to follow up on documents. One can see how the utilization of certain homeless veteran services becomes problematic, thus the homeless veteran may tend to not utilize such resources.

Topic 8: Needs

	Number of Times Mentioned by Travelers	Number of Times Mentioned by Veterans
Food	6	3
Affordable Housing	0	5
Shelter	5	1
Water	4	0
Clothing	4	2
Medical Care	2	6
Financial Assistance	0	2
Work	0	2
Military Paperwork (for accessing benefits)	0	3
Community	0	2
Access to Restroom Facilities	2	0
Other	8	3

The travelers generally have a less complex set of needs they would like to see filled than the veterans. In keeping with their general desire to maintain a self identification as independent individuals, the travelers mostly desired food. Shelter was mentioned by more than half of the travelers, but this was always predicated on the idea that shelter was needed in times of inclement weather. In general the travelers expressed happiness with sleeping outdoors or in cars, in short in ways that are independent of the dominant social system and norms. The two travelers that mentioned medical care as an important need suggested that medical care should be provided for everyone in society.

Most of the desires of the travelers: food, shelter, water and clothes are fairly basic survival tools. These items do not point toward a desire for reintegration or normalization within society. Compared to the veterans we see that the veterans expressed a general desire for affordable housing, whereas the travelers desired only shelter in times of bad weather. The travelers also expressed far more joking responses

than the veterans. We heard responses such as “free beer,” “free weed,” “get out of jail free card” and “free movie tickets” from the travelers. Such responses were not forthcoming from the veterans. This is illustrative of the fact that the travelers were generally happy and satisfied with their homeless status and their lifestyle, while the veterans were in a more anomic social location and desiring of achieving a more normal existence within the bounds of the dominant society.

The “other” category, which had three veteran responses, is representative of these veteran’s statements of needing their families. As a matter of fact, veteran #4 expressed that family was his #1 need, as well as his #5 need. Perhaps if his other needs are met, as well as those of the other homeless veterans, then integration back into mainstream society will bring about the fulfillment of their needs for family.

In the preceding discussion we have laid out the various data gathered in a visual and a verbal format to allow for the reader to access the data and our thoughts on it as it pertains to trends and categories that may exist in these homeless groups at the population level. In the section that follows we will synthesize the various trends and categorizations suggested by our data with the hypothetical assumptions that we began our research planning with, and then

Synthesis

Our research asks the question: How do the two homeless sub-populations, homeless veterans and homeless traveling young adults, identify themselves in their social world and what is their assessment of their needs as being fulfilled by the homeless services available in the Arcata and Eureka, California area? We approached this question with several hypotheses of our own, and had several more occur during the course of our review of the literature on the topic of homelessness.

Looking at the questions with nothing but our preconceived notions we came up with several assumptions. We believed that homeless individuals would exist in anomic states, and would identify themselves as feeling disconnected from, or in conflict with, the dominant society. We presumed that homeless individuals would feel inadequately

served by social service agencies and would desire access primarily to physical necessities rather than proactive services like job training. Perhaps the most grandiose assumption was that homeless persons migrated to the Eureka/Arcata areas specifically for access to homeless services. Following our review of the literature our assumptions shifted somewhat.

The literature available on homeless travelers is insubstantial in volume, while the literature available on homeless veterans is voluminous but narrow in its focus. The literature on these topics suggested that we would find both of our populations to have suffered emotional trauma in their past and to be existing with psychological and substance abuse issues in their present situations. The literature also suggested that the travelers would feel strongly connected with particular different subcultural groups. Some studies suggested that homeless veterans would also feel affinity with a culture of hoboism, giving meaning to their lifestyle. In some work done on homeless populations it was stated that the needs asserted by homeless individuals are different from the needs presumed for them by researchers, suggesting that homeless individuals should be allowed to express needs free from preconceptions by social workers or researchers.

After looking at the hypothetical assumptions that occurred in thinking about our research question, and reviewing the literature available on the topic, we developed a theoretical framework for analyzing these issues. We incorporated a theoretical framework for our methodology in the form of grounded theory. According to grounded theory, a flexible methodology should be developed and evolved over the course of data collection and analysis. This theoretical paradigm is appropriate to an exploratory study amongst a population not well defined in the literature or practically accessible at the population level. This theory allowed us the freedom to develop our questionnaire, our measurement tool, as the data gathering progressed and we developed a better feel for what questions would better elicit the desired and necessary data, as well as what this data included. As the data we collected began to coalesce and hint at patterns we solidified a theoretical framework for our analysis.

Symbolic interactionism formed the basis of our analytical framework. Social interactional situations, through which individuals internally or interpersonally define their world and their identity, are definable for any individual, and provide a set of data

that can be applied to many theories and situations. Combining symbolic interactionism with theories of deviance and anomie made sense for us, as deviance is a socially constructed identification and can only be experienced or asserted in a situation involving shared meaning between “deviant” and “normal” individuals, and anomie can easily be reframed from its traditional role as the social fact of a structuralist to a set of defined and experienced meanings leading to an experience of normlessness. This analytical framework suggested that the methodology we had designed using an evolving qualitative interviewing process would be able to provide the necessary data for a proper analysis.

The data collected, while insufficient for strongly statistically significant conclusions, was sufficient to suggest some agreements and disagreements with our various hypothetical assertions. Our presumption that homeless individuals would exist in anomic states, in conflict with society was not borne out by the data, not at all in the case of the travelers. The travelers seemed able to create a subcultural identity that maintained a level of experienced normative regulation sufficient to avoid expressions of anomic feelings, and this group expressed only occasional philosophical disagreement with the dominant culture, not a state of conflict. The homeless veterans, on the other hand, did express feelings of anomie as discussed above, likely in part as a result of the time spent homeless and their experience of military life’s intense regulation followed by an unregulated civilian life.

The literature suggested strongly that we would find homeless individuals from both groups to have psychological and emotional issues stemming from past trauma, and that many would be substance abusers. The issue of substance abuse was not supported by our data at all. Among the homeless veterans, one subject described himself as an alcoholic, but no others exhibited any distinct signs or made assertions suggesting substance abuse issues. Among the travelers there did seem to be indications of marijuana and alcohol use, and the potential surely existed for abuse, but no subjects interviewed were noticeably inebriated or under the influence of drugs while we talked. As well none of the travelers expressed any interest in “hard” drugs except for one individual who expressed a fondness for psilocybin mushrooms and LSD. While many veterans did seem to have suffered emotional trauma this was not a major factor that came up in the

individuals' self identification as indicated by their choice of response topics during interviews. Among the travelers there was a nearly universal positivity expressed with regards to familial relations and little psychological trauma was evident in their appearance or interviews. Of course many of the results described in this paragraph could be attributed to the fact that our sample wasn't truly representative of the overall populations of these groups in the local area. The need for further research is strongly indicated by this disagreement of hypothesis and actual data.

We found that particular subgroups within the group of traveling homeless did express affinity with a group identity. In our research the "crusties" were a group of which three subjects interviewed were expressly members. This group has a distinctive costuming, aroma and set of behavioral patterns to indicate membership. The membership in the group seems to have provided a protection of sorts from feelings of anomie, as this group seems to derive its identity partially from an exuberant and willful disregard for the behavioral norms of the dominant society. In such a situation it is important to have a strong group identity lest one should feel apart from society as a whole and fall into anomie. All traveler subjects identified as travelers and there was such a similarity to histories and vocabulary when discussing their situations that an informal group identity was suggested by the data, and suggested more strongly by the lack of apparent anomic expressions. Among the veterans there was no real indication of group identity, contrary to the hypothetical assumptions we investigated. This fact is borne out in the data, as homeless veterans exhibited notable amounts of anomic behavior and attitudes.

Different homeless individuals express different needs when asked about it, as our hypothetical assumption predicted. This makes perfect sense, as homeless populations are not composed of homogenous units. Each homeless individual has a unique and likely different storyline that leads to their his or her homeless status. This leads to different self identifications and desires, which leads to different feelings regarding the homeless individuals' status with regards to needs attainment. Among the travelers most desired only basic necessities and even showed a high rate of joking responses, showing a lack of seriousness attributed to their situation with regards to access to necessary resources. The veteran population also had many different takes on what their needs are. This leads us to

accept the hypothetical premise that homeless populations are non-homogenous, and that it is methodologically important to approach an assessment of their needs without preconceptions. In addition, our presumption as to the homeless migrating to the area for access to homeless services was totally unfounded; not one subject from either group under study expressed having migrated to the area to take advantage of homeless services.

Finally we see that the different groups we researched had different attitudes with regards to the types of needs asserted. The travelers tended to focus on the sorts of needs a transient individual, largely unworried about their future, would desire. The travelers wanted food, water and temporary shelter primarily. These represent the bare necessities as experienced by traveling individuals, and this supports our hypothesis. For the veterans it seems that there was a strong desire for help in areas related to the future, like permanent and affordable housing and work. At the same time there was also a desire for help in issues relating to food security and immediate income. The data was inconclusive on this hypothesis for the veteran population, pointing to the need for further research.

We have seen in this section how our hypothetical assumptions informed our theoretical and methodological designs, and how the data have borne out or disputed our various hypotheses. In the conclusion that follows we will discuss, briefly, some further possibilities for research as well as some practical applications suggested by our research.

Conclusion

This paper began with a discussion of homelessness as a ubiquitous presence in our society. This is for reasons cultural and structural as discussed in the introduction, but the constant presence of a homeless population suggests that we ask ourselves “Who comprises this population?” In this conclusion we will attempt to answer this question broadly and then we will briefly discuss some suggestions for more effectively aiding and managing this population as it exists in our local community.

Who are the homeless? They are a non-homogenous group of individuals who, some by chance and some by choice, have come to a situation in life where they no longer maintain access to a permanent place of residence. This brief answer does not

address the complexity of the identities that members of this population take on to make sense of their location in society and the world. Nor does this answer even begin to address the variety of sets of needs expressed by particular homeless individuals.

Homeless travelers are a group of youth and young adults that have chosen to leave the comfort of a home, with family or alone, in favor of an ideologically understood and motivated lifestyle of traveling. They avoid accessing services available to the homeless in areas they travel. This is for the double reason of avoiding taking on the identity of being homeless by taking part in situations that would ascribe this meaning to them, as well this would negate elements of their total ideology of being rebels against the dominant, destructive consumerist society. If they were to engage with the services provided by the welfare system in society they would be acknowledging their role, if to a small extent, as consumers themselves.

The travelers value their identity as such, and sometimes form groups to associate with. These groups provide the function of allowing members to maintain a sense of normative inclusion in a cultural group that helps them avoid feelings of anomie. As well it provides them with a constant re-legitimation of their status as rebels against a dominant society of which they disapprove. The data we collected suggests that this identity supports an ideological outlook on the world which is very important to this group.

The veterans are a population that is not generally homeless by choice. These individuals have found that economic hardship and difficulty maintaining integration with the dominant society in a non-military capacity have left them ill-able to maintain the normal lifestyle that is necessary at some level to remain permanently housed. Individuals in this population experienced anomie and resource insecurity at higher rates than the traveler population did.

Our data suggests that the homeless veterans largely avoid identifying with other homeless veterans. Most subjects in this population were solitary individuals, and there was no expression of solidarity with other homeless veterans. The feelings of anomie experienced by these veterans points to a feeling of apartness from society, and it is unclear whether this feeling of apartness preceded their sense of anomie, or whether

anomie preceded this sense of apartness. Either way the homeless veteran population seems to need more practical assistance than the travelers.

The goal of our research was to learn enough about these two groups of homeless individuals to be able to make some practical suggestions about how society can better allocate resources to meaningfully helping or managing these populations. For the veterans some clear practical suggestions emerged for things that could actually help to decrease the size of this population or to decrease the negative experiences of members of this population. For the travelers less proactive suggestions are apparent from our data.

Our data suggests that homeless veterans could benefit from increased services. The feelings of anomie and alienation from the dominant society so common to this group could be alleviated partially by allowing them easier access to the benefits they are entitled to as veterans. Expanding access to psychiatric or group counseling could help to foster more positive self identities which could help to integrate these individuals back into normalized society more effectively than current services do. As well the creation of local programs to promote permanent low income housing availability to veterans specifically could help to create a real spatial community of veterans that could foster the emergence of a social community of veterans. This could help to decrease feelings of anomie and provide for a more positive sense of belonging in society for this group.

Travelers seem to be generally young and are sustained in their lifestyle by attachment to an ideological belief in the rightness of their disavowal of the dominant culture. In this context the travelers actively avoid accessing services available to them in the local area. Some seemed happy to get food at the endeavor as long as no strings are attached. Given the decreasing resources available to service agencies in a depressed economy, it makes little sense to actively expand services provided to a transient population that does not access the services anyway.

One issue here is that we encountered another subpopulation of travelers that seemed to be fairly heavily involved in drug abuse and which seemed quite ready to threaten violence upon the researcher that approached them. This group is totally unrepresented in the data we gathered, and considering the likely anomic status of a group that threatens violence on members of the dominant society with little provocation, and which may be abusing drugs to escape emotionally and psychically from this

dominant society, it seems inappropriate to ignore them. These individuals informally expressed to us a fear of being targeted by the police or other authority figures, and seem unlikely to seek or access services provided to them. Nevertheless an effort to send social workers or other trained professionals into the field to attempt drawing members of this population, in whatever minor way, back into normalized society could decrease the potential for future acts of violence. Ignoring or mismanaging this group could also lead to creation of a group more or less irreversibly alienated from normalized society, and only negative outcomes could result from such a state of affairs. In this light it is crucial that this group be studied further, acted on and treated seriously, if respectfully.

We have looked closely at a variety of ideas here on issues of culture emergence and deviance from the norms of a dominant society. These themes are strongly applicable in looking at the identities and perceived needs of a homeless population. While our data set was small, and our results often more discursive than statistically significant, we feel that interesting perspectives have been introduced to the discussion of homelessness in our modern society. The information we have laid out here provides ample bases for further research, and suggests the importance of analyzing and understanding the identities of groups within the homeless population as these individuals understand them.

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Informed Consent Form:

A Exploratory Study: Self Identification and Needs Assessment of Two Distinct Homeless Subpopulations

Purpose: Our purpose in this research project is to describe how homeless veterans and young homeless travelers identify themselves in the world. We also want to assess what needs these people feel they require from local service agencies, and how well these needs are met.

Do Not Participate if Under the Age of 18

Confidentiality: At no time will individuals be identified by their real names in this research. All the information we gather will remain confidential at all times. We will never use a subject's name in our writing.

All interview tapes/transcripts is given a code that only the two researchers involved is able to decrypt.

The data we gather in interviews is recorded and then typed up on a computer. The typed data is printed and stored in a locked safe, under the care of one of the researchers, for three years after the study is complete. After that time the data is destroyed by incineration.

All research subjects is offered a copy of the informed consent form.

Time Commitment:

A one half hour time commitment, from each subject of this research, is required. This is the most time we expect an interview to take, and this is the only time commitment we will expect from the subjects.

Risks: Participation in this project is optional, and the interview can be stopped at any time. The risks to subjects in this research are very slight. Subjects may feel frustration, annoyance, or fatigue during the interview. Again, the interview can be stopped at any time by the subject. All the interview information is kept secure and confidential, so aside from any annoyance, frustration, or fatigue that the subject feels, no additional risk is posed by taking part in this research.

Benefits: By taking part in this research we hope to improve the services that local agencies provide to the homeless. This may help you by improving the services that you have access to. We, the researchers, do not guarantee that any change in services offered to you will occur.

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Subject Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

A Exploratory Study: Self Identification and Needs Assessment of Two Distinct Homeless Subpopulations

Project Questions for Interview Subjects

History:

- 1) Can you tell me about your history? (Where you grew up; siblings; parents; parent's employment; education.)
- 2) How often do you contact your family? Can you describe your current relationship with your family?

Self-Identification:

- 1) Do you consider yourself to be homeless, or houseless? (If yes, probe for possible reasons as to current homeless/ houseless state; length of current state, have job, or jobless.) **Note: May need to define homeless to subject, using criteria set forth in McKinney Act.**
- 2) Are you a veteran of the armed forces? (Probe: If "yes", branch of service and character of discharge?)
- 3) Are you from the Arcata/ Eureka areas, or did you migrate here from another area? (If subject migrated to this area, probe for reasons why: family, services, etc. Did/ does subject travel alone, or with another person or group? How long is subject planning on staying in area?)
- 4) Do you consider yourself to be a deviant due to your current homeless/ houseless condition? (Deviant is defined to the subject as deviating especially from an accepted norm.)
- 5) Do you think that society is criminalizing persons who may be experiencing homelessness/ houselessness? (Probe: Have you been cited, by the police, for any reasons associated with your homelessness/ houselessness?)

Attainment of Homeless Services/ Needs Assessment:

- 1) Are you aware of the homeless aid/ service agencies within the Arcata/ Eureka areas? (Probe: If "yes", how were you made aware of such agencies, and have you tried to access any of those agencies?)
- 2) **(for self-identified veterans only)** Are you aware of the veterans programs available to assist you with housing, job, and medical needs? (Probe: If "yes", have you tried to access any of these agencies, and if so, with what results?)
- 3) Please list your top five needs as a homeless/ houseless person. Are these needs being met by the homeless aid/ service agencies you may have been in contact with?