Methodological Considerations for Researching Hidden-Populations With an Emphasis on Homeless Research Sampling Methods

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METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR RESEARCHING HIDDEN-POPULATIONS WITH AN EMPHASIS ON HOMELESS RESEARCH SAMPLING METHODS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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This Dissertation by: Tyler William Kincaid

Entitled: Methodological Considerations for Researching Hidden-Populations with an Emphasis on Homeless Research Sampling Methods

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in the Department of Applied Statistics and Research Methods, Program of Applied Statistics and Research Methods

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ABSTRACT


The purpose of this study was to: (a) gain a methodological understanding of hidden population sampling techniques and to offer insight into which approach is best suited for a given researcher’s sample; and (b) to provide increased methodological understanding of how to best research hidden populations like the homeless by providing researchers, social care providers, and governing bodies with detailed guidelines for their work with the homeless. Regardless of the method, hidden and homeless populations are hard to find, understand, and approach with cultural responsiveness (Roche, et al. in Lahman, 2017). Using a critical theoretical approach to the research, this study actively applied the role of reflexivity as a methodology. This study considered the voices of persons experiencing homelessness, homeless population researches, and social care providers as experts in the field, terming them stakeholders in the research. Data consisted of 20 in-depth interviews with stakeholders, observational data collection from a national point-in-time survey, and reflexivity data. A thematic analysis was conducted with an overlay of reflexive analysis to add context of the researcher’s role in the sampling, data collection, and analysis. Methodological findings such as (1) homeless is not a singular population, (2) culture defined by setting and regulation of research location, and that (3) selection bias is real were found. Ethical considerations such as (1)
researcher is most likely your least important role, (2) researchers must know resources to support vulnerability of sample, and (3) self-care for providers and researchers were found. Furthermore, findings involving reflexivity and the importance of the method to help generalize data from homeless populations are found. Implications of the findings from this study are presented in the form of guidelines for researchers to use and to provide to people experiencing homelessness.

Keywords: hidden populations, hard-to-reach populations, homeless populations, homelessness, critical theory, reflexivity, sampling methods, sampling bias
All my life I've been taught how to think and feel.
Had preconceived ideas before experiencing anything for real.
My parents, schools, and peers made up my mind.
But now it’s time to stop and look around and see what I really find...

Question everything!
I've accepted without thinking.
Make sure I have a basis for what I believe in.

How can you make a real decision choosing from a set of solutions that you never really questioned at all?

Let me try to explain as straightforward as I can…
my way of thinking for breaking down mental walls:

Drop self-imposed limitations that restrict your choice in situations and you can figure out what you really want to do. Take into consideration the effect of your actions on those around you...

Question everything!
You've accepted without thinking.
Make sure you have a basis for what you believe in.
(Yes, everything) – Free Will (Crimpshrine), 1992
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This document and degree would have been meaningless if not for Dr. Suzanne Victoria Landram, my Suzy Q. I love you all the way. Thank you sharing your life with me. Thank you for being my best friend. I would be lost without you.

This document would have been impossible without the guidance of Dr. Maria Lahman. Thank you. You did it, you got me through it all. I can’t thank you enough. I am so sad that we no longer work together, but I am happy in the thought that we will be friends and colleagues forever.

I would also like to thank my family, friends, colleagues, punk rock music, skateboarding, the Crusty Crew, the Live-Die Crew, Sophia Montoya-Gonzalez, Sumo Takahari, Leah Dog, and everyone else who was part of this journey. There are too many of you to name, and that makes me happy. Thank you everyone.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Hidden populations without a specific sampling frame (complete knowledge of the sample representing the population), like homeless populations, are difficult to sample from accurately. These hard-to-reach populations consist of social groups such as people living in extreme poverty, homeless persons, undocumented immigrants, as well as children of undocumented immigrants. Even members of society living with high incomes can be considered a part of a rare or hidden population. As Marpsat and Razafindratsima (2010) stated: "renewal of interest in social inequalities also leads to the inclusion among hard-to-reach populations of persons with very high income or assets" (p. 3). While the collection of data from hidden and hard to reach populations has become easier to obtain in recent years through the access of such data from public documents found on the Internet (Baltar & Brunet, 2012) these populations still remain a methodologically challenging area.

Hidden populations, also referred to as ‘hard to reach’, are a population of interest with relatively low numbers, that are hard to identify, with no sampling frame (Duncan, White, & Nicholson, 2003; Lambert & Wiebel, 1990; Marpsat & Razafindratsima, 2010; TenHouten, 2017). Certain characteristics may be similar among many hidden populations in that most of the members do not wish to disclose that they are members of such populations due to vulnerability, social stigmas, unwanted behavior such as
substance abuse, traumatic past events that they do not wish to revisit, or personal liberties such as not wanting to disclose information pertaining to income, assets, beliefs, or social affairs. These hidden populations' social norms, cultural values, and beliefs along with each population's social problems are of interest to researchers. Many of the social problems such as the spread of disease through unsafe intravenous drug practices, low-birth mortality rates among immigrants, or extreme poverty are of the utmost importance to research.

The main sampling problem is as follows, if the behavior of the population of interest is not publicly known than it is extremely difficult to access members. Current sampling methods that are being applied lack accuracy in sampling techniques due to not having a truly defined sampling frame instead utilizing a ‘one-size-fits-all’ methodological sampling approach. Marpsat and Razafindratsima (2010) give the example of surveying homeless persons only in shelters and thus not including those who sleep on the street, at friends’ homes, or elsewhere. In 2009, the National Institute of Demographic Studies in Paris, France was held to spark discussion among researchers who conducted studies with hidden populations on the ongoing problems and issues that exist in research with hidden populations. The meeting focused on constructing probability samples (or rather samples that can be ‘extrapolated’, i.e. that allow the production of unbiased estimators with a calculable variance), where there is no sampling frame, particularly using TLS (time-location sampling), RDS (respondent-driven sampling or probability snowballing) and capture-recapture (Marpsat & Razafindratsima, 2010, p. 4). Furthermore, finding the link between the hidden population and the
probability sampling techniques designed to accurately define the hard to reach
population like homeless people is even more unknown, misunderstood, and understudied
(Torino & Sisselman-Borgia, 2017).

**Purpose of the Methodological Aspect of the Research**

The purpose of this study was to: (a) gain a methodological understanding of
hidden population sampling techniques and to offer insight into which approach is best
suited for a given researcher’s sample; and (b) to provide increased methodological
understanding of how to best research hidden populations like the homeless by providing
researchers, social care providers, and governing bodies with detailed guidelines for their
work with the homeless.

**Rationale for the Methodological Aspect of the Study**

Methodological approaches such as the TLS, RDS, snowball sampling, sequential
sampling, and capture re-capture all come with their own benefits and problems (Etikan,
Alkassim, & Abubakar, 2016; Kendall, et al., 2008). See Chapter II for an in-depth
explanation of these sampling methods. Regardless of the method, hidden populations
are hard to find, understand, and approach with cultural responsiveness (Roche, et al. in
Lahman, 2017).

Furthermore, each stated sampling method above involves the initial method of
finding, contacting, and communicating with the **people** in the hidden population. Yet,
there is no such thing as a simple sampling frame to reference like an email listserv,
contact sheet, or list of telephone numbers. Therefore, the problem becomes that
population samples are hard to generalize from due to their hidden or unknown lifestyles.
This, in turn, makes research with the homeless population that much harder to conduct,
or at the very least, conduct well. The methodological problems that arise from this broader issue are that the sampling approaches that are utilized currently provide no roadmap to help the researchers through the first step of cultural competency in locating, communication, and referral. The rationale of this study, using a critical theory approach, was to create a methodological roadmap for researchers, social care providers and governing bodies to follow when conducting sampling of and research with homeless populations due to the lack of an overarching methodological guideline to follow. This approach used the experts, or as defined in Chapter III, stakeholders of homeless research which included people experiencing homelessness, researchers, social care workers, and homeless culture artists. The voice of the homeless stakeholders provided a path for the roadmap to a better understanding of homeless sampling methodology.

Description of Study

Hidden populations do not lend themselves easily to study. This is the natural outcome of being a hidden population: that it is hidden and thus hard to find. Furthermore, the homeless population tends to want to stay hidden or is forced into hiding through the process of legal and social models (Christian, Abrams, Clapham, Nayyar, & Cotler, 2016; Mabhala, Yohannes, & Griffith, 2017). Legal models cause the state of being homeless to be interpreted as a vagrant or public nuisance and social models cast stigmas of physical disability or laziness, which may cause people to wish to be hidden.

Goldfischer (2018) shed light on this issue in New York City where law enforcement, along with local news media and housed residents used public websites to shame homeless persons and “out” their locations among the city in an attempt to reclaim
street corners from homeless in what is referred to as “backgrounding” the problem of homelessness into a more hidden, out of sight problem for the housed. This process of casting homeless persons into hiding, through choice or force, is becoming far too common (Darrah-Okike, Soakai, Nakaoka, Dunson-Strane, & Umemoto, 2018; Peterson, 2017) and can only cause more difficulty in finding valid samples of homeless persons to research and understanding the culture, sample, and way of life.

Understanding the concepts of space, identity, condition, health, family, and shelter (just to name a few) for the homeless is constrained by the hidden nature of the population. However, it would seem that hidden populations like the homeless are the type of groups that need the most understanding and social care (Van Leeuwen, 2018). Also, understanding the homeless helps a society to understand the broader aspects of their culture as well. A negative sense of self-worth, loneliness, and other daily struggles with street life are a core issue in working to better the condition of homeless persons to increase their quality of life (Watson, Crawley, & Kane, 2016). Adequately providing housing, health care, and social care of homeless individuals is an issue should not be ignored.

While many homeless persons want to stay hidden, those individuals who are a part of a homeless group who remain in the public eye can benefit from this research. Increased understanding of the homeless person, their culture, and their way of life are vital to understanding how ethically to conduct research with the population. Many researchers (e.g. Faraji, Ridgeway, & Wu, 2018; Koh, Bharel, & Henderson, 2016; Reeb, Hunt, Wetter, & Hartman, 2017) have concentrated on homeless individuals and families within homeless shelters and have thus provided a solid body of literature regarding the
sheltered portion of the homeless population. However, this is only a start in the process of understanding the entire population. While current and past survey methodology does provide many ways of accessing the larger population of the homeless in a given area (snowball, response-driven sampling, chain-sampling, etc.), there is no consensus of what sampling methods are best for the homeless population. Providing a detailed guideline, or roadmap, to researchers before they wish to conduct research with homeless populations will better the work of the researcher and help provide a more ethical and culturally relevant experience for the homeless.

**Research Questions**

Q1 What methodological considerations do stakeholders in homeless research identify with hidden-population sampling methods?

Q2 What areas for ethical consideration do stakeholders of homeless research with hidden-populations identify with hard-to-reach sampling methods?

Q3 How does the exploration of the researcher’s history, position and reflexivity impact this research?

**Summary of Chapter I**

Hidden populations do not have readily available guidelines to help researchers understand their social norms, cultural values, and beliefs. This is especially true for the homeless. The purpose of this study was to gain a methodological understanding of hidden population sampling techniques through an in-depth investigation of one specific hidden group, the homeless, with the rationale that the sampling of and research with homeless population needs to be better understood by researchers, social care providers, and governing bodies. The goal of the research was to use the understandings of homeless population experts, or stakeholders, to enhance the way current hidden population sampling methodology occurs in research.
Literature related to methodological considerations of sampling hidden populations was presented in Chapter II. Furthermore, the application of these methods and how they have been used with many different types of populations, including the homeless was provided. A detailed examination of the current research on hidden populations, with specific consideration to the homeless populations that exist was outlined in Chapter II. Finally, ethical areas of note when conducting research with hidden populations identified in the literature were highlighted.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

In Chapter II I provide a detailed examination of the current research on hidden populations, with emphasis on homeless populations. Through this chapter, I also explored the methodological considerations when sampling hidden populations that were present in the current literature followed by a review of the methodological literature related to sampling methods, as well as a review of what is considered the best approaches to sampling Hard to Reach Populations (HTRP). The importance of gaining access and trust when conducting hidden population research was explored. Finally, ethical areas of note when researching hidden populations will be highlighted.

Hidden and Hard to Reach Populations

Hidden populations were also commonly referred to as hard to reach populations because they were difficult to find and “often actively seek to conceal their group identity” (Duncan et al., 2003, p. 210). The label “hard to reach population” generally refers to a group that has some sort of disadvantage such as those with an illicit drug use problem, criminal offenders, prostitutes, gang members, runaways, homeless, transients, and groups at risk of contracting HIV (Lambert & Wiebel, 1990). Two distinguishing characteristics of a hidden population are: (a) the size and boundaries of the population are relatively unknown, in other words, no sampling frame exists; and (b) the members of such a group are trying to stay private or hidden due to illegal behavior, stigmatization, or cultural privacy rules. Collecting data and sampling from these HTRPs can be quite
difficult because many of these individuals want to stay private or hidden for the various reasons stated previously.

**Methodological Literature Review of Homeless Population Sampling Approaches**

**Homelessness in the United States**

As previously discussed, there are many and varied groups that may be called a hidden population including gangs, migrants, undocumented people and so on (Duncan et al., 2003; Lambert & Wiebel, 1990; TenHouten, 2017). For the purpose of this dissertation, and due to the pressing needs in homeless research, as well as my personal in-depth experiences and research with this group, the homeless were the hidden group of focus for this study.

Homelessness in the U.S. is a tragic social problem that continually flies beneath the radar of the everyday “normal” person. With millions of Americans living their lives without nightly shelter, thousands upon thousands of minds are lost to the harsh realities of a brutal life on the streets (National Coalition for the Homeless 2010). Men, women, and children are forced into prostitution, lives are ruined by violence, and countless others are lost in the tragedy of mental illness and substance abuse (Nooe & Patterson, 2010). With the epidemic of homelessness continually affecting the entire U.S., researchers from various areas, have worked to improve the homeless condition through a better understanding of the pathways into first time and episodic homelessness. Nooe and Patterson define homelessness into three categories: situational (first-time), episodic (experiencing episodes), and chronic homelessness (Nooe & Patterson, 2010). Depending on the time spent on the streets, along with the number of transitional support services available, different levels of perceptions of the problem for the individual tend to change.
Social Issues of Homelessness

Recent studies into the understanding of what the population of homelessness resembles in the U.S. have led to some startling results. The harsh reality illustrated by previous research in the field has shown that individuals who are not able to end their experience with homelessness in the first few episodes are much more likely to acquire long-term physical and mental disorders like substance abuse and schizophrenia. Arangua, Andersen, and Gelberg (2005) shed light on the increased problem of homeless women in what they refer to as the *Feminization* of homelessness. The increase in homeless women, growing from an estimated 3% in 1964 to 32% in 2006 has changed the dynamic of services for the homeless with women needing very different social and health care needs (Arangua et al., 2005). While more recently, an increase of women with families seeking transitional care has put a greater demand on services provided to the homeless (Coker, Meyer, Smith, & Price, 2010), along with the homeless individuals’ perceptions of what services provided are helpful (Swick & Williams, 2010). The changing dynamic of homelessness and the administrative handling of the problem have also been studied and shown to again put strain on an already overloaded social needs system that is still learning to deal properly with homeless families (Miller, 2011).

The changing dynamic of the homeless population in the U.S. leads to a new understanding of what the changing pathways into homelessness resemble, especially for the new female and family subgroups. Tessler, Rosenheck, and Gamache (2001) studied pathways into homelessness by searching for gender differences among self-reported reasons for homelessness. The results of their quantitative study reported males citing economic and social factors as their main pathways, while females focused more on
interpersonal problems and relationships as the main pathways that lead them to homelessness (Tessler et al., 2001). The understanding that men and women not only tend to need different social care networks while experiencing homelessness, along with different self-perceived pathways into the problem gives way to a new understanding of what the homeless condition truly is like.

A recent long-term study in the Mid-Western U.S. showed not only how long-term numbers of homelessness change during economic expansions in the 1990s and 2000s, but more importantly to this study showed how long-term homelessness can affect the mental and physical condition of the homeless individual (Israel, Toro, & Ouellette, 2010). Evidence of increased physical health problems and stress all change the experience of the individual after the problem has become chronic, as well as the tragic increase in schizophrenia and mental illness (Israel et al., 2010).

**Difficult to Research**

The homeless population in the United States (U.S.) can be one of the most difficult and challenging populations to research. Many problems and challenges arise at the onset of research. First, the transient nature of the homeless population creates the problem of locating individuals to study and additionally creates a problem of relocating the same individuals for any type of follow up. The lack of a decent sampling frame makes surveying the homeless, even for basic purposes like counting the number of homeless, a serious challenge. Second, the vulnerable nature of homeless persons, many of which have an increased risk of *Biopsychosocial Risk Factors* that seem to lead to larger problems within the population (Nooe & Patterson, 2010). Individual factors stemming from homelessness like health impairment, substance abuse, mental illness,
social isolation, sexual abuse, maltreatment, criminal activity, self-harm, job loss and death; as well as social factors like poverty, property crime, prostitution, street violence, public inebriation, panhandling, and community discord all lead to the bigger problem of attempting to conduct research with such a vulnerable population (Nooe & Patterson, 2010). These problems of researching a population without a definable sampling frame and one that has an increased risk of vulnerability create a methodological issue for administering that truly cover the population and can be generalizable. While applied research and methodological literature regarding surveying the homeless do exist, there is a serious dearth in academic publications. With no real set of standards or informed guidebook, the process of surveying the homeless is built upon a wide range of sampling techniques that should all be considered. Through this literature review, I discussed a wide range of overarching applied techniques used in surveying homeless and other vulnerable populations. Representative sampling and street-intercept sampling provide a starting point for conducting survey research with the homeless.

**Non-Probability Sampling Methods**

Although it was difficult to gain accurate samples on the HTRP, the traditional approach to researching or accounting for such populations has been conducted via snowball sampling, key informant sampling, and targeted sampling. These sampling techniques and the utilization of these approaches for studying HTRP were discussed below.

**Key Informants**

Key informants are vital to the use of any “non-probability” sampling method (Marshall, 1996). They are the starting point for collecting information from a sample. Marshall (1996) described key informants as members of a society that "as a result of
their personal skills, or position within a society, can provide more information and a
deeper insight into what is going on around them". Two types of informants described by
Gideon, Sjoberg and Nett are individuals who share the same characteristics as members
of a given society and conform to the social norms, or individuals who present more
extreme attitudes and views than regular members of a given society do (Gideon,
Sjoberg, & Nett, 1968). Tremblay (1957) described the five personal qualities that a key
informant should possess, which include: 1.) relevant role in the community; 2.)
knowledgeable on the subject matter and of other members that may be contacted; 3.)
willing to communicate knowledge to the researcher; 4.) capable of communicating their
knowledge in an intelligible manner; and 5.) impartiality (i.e. objective and unbiased). In
the current context of sampling the homeless, a homeless person or an advocate for the
homeless would not be considered impartial to the research, as they are actively either
experience the phenomenon or actively trying to help fight the phenomenon.

One disadvantage to using key informants is the fact these five qualities are
subjective in nature. In other words, the information provided by the key informant to the
researcher is only as relevant as the researcher foresees it to be. Other possible
weaknesses of using key informants are that they seldom possess all of the qualities laid
out by Tremblay (1957) and within in contemporary context impartiality would not be
considered achievable or perhaps even be a goal. A key informant's role in their
community cannot be omniscient in nature, therefore, the information they provide will
always be biased and based on how they perceive it to be. However, the advantage of
using key informants is that informative data can be obtained in a relatively short amount
of time. As Marshall (1996) stated, "to obtain the same amount of information and insight
from in-depth interviews with other members of a community can be prohibitively time-consuming and expensive" (p. 93).

**Snowball Sampling Method**

A snowball sample method is a common approach to studying HTRP in which members are difficult to identify, locate, and document. This method is not random and is built on respondents being found through the process of referral from one respondent to the next. This approach is a non-probability sampling technique used in research studies where the participants are hard to locate therefore members of the sample are chosen through a selection-bias process where one member will refer the researchers to other members of a given HTRP group. Snowball sampling is an acceptable method when studying hidden or HTRP (Brañas, Barrigón, Garrido-Torres, Perona-Garcelán, Rodríguez-Testal, Lahera, & Ruiz-Veguilla, 2016; Lopes, Rodrigues, & Sichieri, 1996; Watters & Biernacki, 1989).

**Snowball and site sampling.** Recently, TenHouten (2017) designed a sampling methodology stemming from the snowball sampling technique to study the ideology and leadership structure in lower-class black and Latino communities in Los Angeles. TenHouten (2017) applied a methodological approach known as "site sampling, used in conjunction with snowball sampling." The rationale for the given sampling methodology is based on the premise that "individuals can be located only where they are, and when they are there" (TenHouten, 2017). This synergistic approach that combines snowball and site sampling has been outlined by TenHouten (2017) as the following:

1. If an individual were not accessible in residential (R) setting, then they must be found in commercial or public-use areas (C) such as parks, railway stations, churches, mosques;
2. If individuals were inaccessible inside (I) dwelling units or structures, then they must be found outside (O).

3. If individuals cannot be located in the daytime (D), they must be found at night (N).

Although this new sampling methodology has only been applied to studying black and Latino communities after the Watts Riot that took place in Los Angeles in August 1965, this method may be a logical approach to studying HTRP such as the homeless (TenHouten, 2017). Furthermore, findings from this sampling methodological approach suggested that there were “numerous significant between-site differences in political ideology, political involvement, racial attitudes, and social behaviors” (TenHouten, 2017, p. 60). Although snowball sampling will always be a selection bias sampling technique, TenHouten’s application of the combined sampling methods may give way to a new approach to sampling other HTRPs. This new approach may provide the researcher with a way of expanding their sample or at least organizing members of the sample that could help further the understanding of the given HTRP.

While the snowball sampling technique may be the most commonly used non-probability sampling method discussed there are problems with the approach due to the fact that “inferences about individuals must rely mainly on the initial sample, since additional individuals found by tracing chains are never found randomly or even with known biases” (Erickson, 1979, p. 299). Heckathorn (1997) explained, “because of these potential biases, snowball samples typically are seen as convenience samples that lack any valid claim to produce unbiased and consistent samples” from a quantitative perspective (p. 175).
Targeted Sampling

Another sampling method that may be used in researching hidden and HTRP is the targeted sampling technique. This approach is commonly referred to as a purposeful, systematic method "by which controlled lists of specified populations within geographical districts are developed and detailed plans are designed to recruit adequate numbers of cases within each of the targets" (Watters & Biernacki, 1989). This sampling approach is not a convenience sampling technique but rather a method that an approach that uses systematic information when "true random sampling is not feasible and when convenience sampling is not rigorous enough to meet the assumption of the research design" (Watters & Biernacki, 1989). Thus, this may be an ideal sampling method for studying populations of homelessness and other HTRP. Targeted sampling includes the initial mapping and defining of geographical areas in which participants have been directly observed. After the geographic areas have been established, the next step would be identifying and unveiling the social organizations in which the target group exists otherwise known as ethnographic mapping (Watters & Biernacki, 1989). Using geographic and ethnographic mapping techniques provides the researcher with information that helps to identify the major sub-groups of the population being studied. Strategies for the recruitment of members of these sub-groups can start to be developed at this point and can be customized to fit each sub-group. Pertaining to homeless populations, targeted sampling can help to modify the interview questions that are asked of members in a given sub-groups such as age, gender, ethnic background, particular drug use, and other characteristics that define each sub-group. Researchers that utilize the target sampling method must be willing to be flexible with their sampling frame. Recruitment efforts evolve with each bit of new data that is collected and modifications
to the sampling frame must be implemented. These ongoing modifications are both the strength and weakness of this particular sampling method (Carlson, Wang, Siegal, Falck, & Guo, 1994; Watters & Biernacki, 1989). The strength lies in the ability to respond to the changing characteristics of the targeted sub-groups of the sample. Contrarily, this method takes a considerable amount of time with constant evaluation of the sampling strategies utilized (Carlson et al., 1994). However, in recent years publicly accessible secondary datasets on a given population can reduce the amount of time a researcher must spend on finding geographical settings (Allen et al., 2018).

**Qualitative Methodology with the Homeless Population**

Much of the research currently being conducted in the area of homelessness has been towards understanding the phenomena quantitatively. However, searching qualitatively for the stated perceptions can be beneficial to help grow and build a database of research that works to understand the pathways into homelessness. In the Netherlands, Van Doorn (2010) used qualitative methods to study the perceptions of formerly chronic homeless persons. The results of her work have shown that in the long-term, loss of perception of time and space along with the loss of social understanding is highly prevalent among the formerly homeless. Van Doorn also paints a picture that these losses of perception need to be unlearned to regain a normal life in society (Van Doorn, 2010). These changes in the dynamic of what it means to be homeless in the sense of first-time versus chronic paints a picture of a harsh reality that those individuals who do not end their experience with homelessness before the phenomenon becomes chronic have a much greater chance of acquiring physical and mental disorders. In what Nooe and Patterson (2010) call a “tragically persistent social phenomenon”, the need to work
toward research that strives to understand further the pathways into homelessness becomes more and more important (p. 138).

**Meta-Synthesis Methodology with the Homeless Population**

Meta-synthesis is a qualitative method of systematically investigating qualitative research findings (Jensen & Allen, 1996). It is an overarching method to understand the body of research knowledge available for a research topic. It can be used to enhance methods, develop a theoretical knowledge base, and understand information from a large number of qualitative and mixed-methods studies. The idea is that one researcher, or a group of researchers, can integrate narratives for one population through the process of synthesizing multiple qualitative studies is the concept behind the use of meta-synthesis with the homeless population. The ultimate goal of the method is to account for similarities in research, parallels in the language, and to gain a larger perspective of the phenomena in question.

Multiple meta-synthesis analyses have been conducted with specific homeless population sub-groups. For example, Meadows-Oliver (2003, 2006) conducted meta-synthesis research surrounding homeless mothers living with children in shelters and the life experiences of homeless adolescent mothers.

**Survey Methodology with Homeless Populations**

**Representative sampling methodology.** The first consideration of surveying the homeless, be it for counting purposes or for more in-depth research regarding biopsychosocial risk factors, is the sampling frame. With no set of names, phone numbers, email addresses, or physical addresses to start with; creating a sampling frame
that represents the population can create a research project in itself. Marpsat and Firdion (1999) conducted a multi-level survey in Paris, France to estimate the number of homeless individuals using public services provided in the region (Marpsat & Firdion, 1999). Working with the theory that counting the homeless at strictly the “street” level could lead to double counting, Marpsat and Firdion used a representative sampling approach in their survey. The representative approach was used to count those homeless individuals that use the daytime and overnight services within Paris, but also the homeless individuals that might have been living in some sort of temporary or illegal housing within the city.

The rationale of Marpsat and Firdion (1999) was to exclude counting and surveying only the individuals they encountered sleeping on the streets due to the very low occurrence of homeless persons in Paris not using some sort of provided service within the city. The sample design created and used by Marpsat and Firdion was one that focused on the amount of “site days” available at each outreach shelter. While some of the day and overnight shelters might have different days and hours of operations, the researchers used each outreach shelter’s specific hours of operation to guide the representative nature of the survey. In short, they worked throughout the span of one-month surveying individuals during the working hours of the outreach shelters to gain a representative sample of the homeless population in the city.

Yet, there is one inherent problem to surveying homeless individuals at multiple outreach service centers within one large metropolitan area: some individuals might very well use multiple services and outreach centers to gain as much help for themselves as possible. To account for this problem, two sampling frames were considered. The first
sampling frame was food services provided, while the second sampling frame considered was the social service networks provided to homeless individuals (such as overnight shelters and daytime services like laundry and showers). This consideration allowed the researchers to stratify the representative sampling frame based on the services provided, and the size of the service center.

After creating a theoretical sampling frame to be used, an attempt was made by the researchers to randomize the sample to create a probabilistic model to identify the number of homeless in Paris. A theoretical total of 606 questionnaires were created in an attempt to randomize the survey. The attempt to randomize the sample occurred in two different ways. First, from the more long-term outreach service centers, a list of individuals who frequented the centers was obtained and used to leave a paper letter for them explaining the nature of the survey and why they sought them out. This created many problems for the researchers, most of which involved a very low response rate to the letters, and the fact the randomizing these letters was extremely difficult. Second, a team of interviewers was sent out each day during the month to intercept individuals within the short-term outreach centers. In an attempt to randomize this process, each interviewer was to select each third person standing in line within a given shelter. This again caused many problems, most of which involved the fact that most homeless in large metropolitan areas travel in packs and rarely stand in line.

Ultimately, two distinct problems arose for this form of sampling the homeless that can be used as guidelines for future survey research with the homeless. First, homeless individuals were often hostile when initially approached by interviewers. The transient nature of homelessness is one of generally staying under the radar of normal
society, and in this specific case, some homeless individuals had been victims of unethical journalists using hidden cameras to report on homeless person’s behavior without their consent. Second, some of the outreach centers were not supportive of the idea of surveying individuals within the shelters. This was mainly due to service providers protecting the mental health and well-being of the highly vulnerable individuals that frequented their establishments.

The completed questionnaire surveys were compiled with a response rate of 98%, based on the theoretical sample of 606 required surveys. Of the 591 completed surveys, most of them fit the sampling frames created before the administration of the survey. Yet, what is most important to the nature of surveying the homeless is the massive amount of refusals reported by Marpsat and Firdion (1999). While the study was able to collect 591 completed surveys, a reported 353 homeless individuals refused the survey for reasons stemming from disinterest to lack of feeling well enough to take the survey. It appears that the major problem for Marpsat and Firdion in their research was a lack of cultural understanding of the homeless, along with the desire to randomize their experiment. The transitory nature of homelessness was not given enough consideration by the interviewers, and it appears that the eventual large sample size (591) was mostly due to the size to the metropolitan area and not the representativeness of the population.

Important lessons can be learned from the problems Marpsat and Firdion (1999) faced in their research: cultural and operational considerations of not only the homeless individual but also of the outreach center personnel. However, on a positive note, the use of multiple sample frames to attempt to find a representative sample of homeless populations can very much be considered and used in further research. The attempt to
randomize a sample of such a hard to reach population seems difficult at best, but the stratification of services and outreach centers within one large metropolitan area is a process that could help any researcher attempting to survey homeless individuals.

Closer to home, in the U.S., many different attempts have been made to understand not only the number of homeless individuals but also of the nature and conditions of the homeless individuals themselves. Rossi, Wright, Fisher and Willis (1987) attempted the first major probabilistic survey of homeless persons in the U.S. in the city of Chicago, Illinois (Rossi et al., 1987). Rossi et al. (1987) attempted, much like Marpsat and Firdion (1999), to apply a representative sampling frame of the city, based upon the size of the city and the amount of outreach service shelters present in the city. Again, many problems arose from their attempt to create a theoretical sampling frame of a population that has none. First, the cultural competency of the homeless population was not given enough consideration. Rossi et al. (1987) used both off-duty law enforcement officers and social workers to track down individuals from selected sampling frames around the city of Chicago. This created many problems, most of which were again the transient nature of the homeless individual and the researchers attempt to use law enforcement to help count homeless individuals. This led to many homeless fleeing the area when first noticing the presence of law enforcement. Second, unlike Marpsat and Firdion, Rossi et al. (1987) attempted to survey and count homeless individuals only during night-time hours (midnight to 6 am). This posed the problem of contacting individuals who reported not being homeless and left room for speculation that some homeless individuals might not be wandering the streets at all hours of the night. In fact, Marpsat and Firdion cited the problems of attempting nighttime only surveys in their
rationale for working during daytime hours at outreach service centers. Again, the main considerations of cultural understanding of interviewers played a major role in the ability to succeed in surveying the homeless.

In 1988, Burnam and Koegel also attempted to survey the homeless population of a large metropolitan area through the process of the representative sampling methodology, this time in Los Angeles, California (Burnam & Koegel, 1988). Considerations and attention were placed on the problems and issues that Rossi et al. (1987) had experienced just a few years before. Again, much like Marpsat and Firdion (1999), Burnam and Koegel attempted to create a representative sample of a population without a usable sampling frame. This specific study by Burnam and Koegel was to create a probabilistic model not only of the amount of homeless in Los Angeles but of the amount and type of possible mental disorders afflicting the homeless in Los Angeles. In their attempt to create a representative sample for the large and diverse metropolitan area of Los Angeles, Burnam and Koegel applied the process of using an entire month to span areas that homeless persons frequent throughout the city. In fact, Marpsat and Firdion reported the work of Burnam and Koegel as a guide to helping create a representative sample of homeless. Three major considerations were discovered in the work of Burnam and Koegel that can be used by any researcher attempting to survey the homeless. First, the consideration of the mental stability of respondents was given top priority. Training of interviewers to manage and consider the mental well-being of homeless individuals in the area was completed before administration of the survey. Second, the stratification of frequented areas was applied to the representative sample to gain a better understanding of the diverse nature of the homeless population. Again, this method was applied in Paris,
France by Marpsat and Firdion. However, Marpsat and Firdion did not take into full consideration the managerial and operational aspects of those people running the social outreach centers and shelters. Burnam and Koegel's ability to build a positive report with service providers in the Los Angeles area worked as a catalyst for gaining a decent representative sample. Finally, Burnam and Koegel used extensive time, money, and energy to compile the initial sampling frame and to administer the surveys. This final consideration sheds a great deal of importance on the nature of using a representative sample methodology to survey and estimate the homeless population numbers and characteristics. If an attempt is made by any researcher to use a representative sample approach to surveying the homeless, time and money must be the first consideration. The amount of effort, training, background knowledge and length of administration not only guide the survey but also dictate the eventual success of the survey.

**Street-Intercept methodology.** When the issues of time and money complicate a survey design, much like the representative methodology we have already discussed; the importance of finding a more cost-effective and usable approach increases. Locating and contacting hard to reach populations like the homeless through more cost-effective measures has been utilized to great extent by many researchers, unfortunately, to those individuals seeking out homeless populations, they have mostly been used to survey other marginalized populations like inter-city African-Americans and individuals with HIV (Moon, Binson, Page-Shafer, & Diaz, 2001).

Miller, Wilder, Stillman, and Becker (1997) used an extensive street-intercept survey methodology to attempt to gain a better understanding of the inter-city African-Americans in Baltimore, Maryland. The utility of using the street intercept methodology
was examined through the response rates of two different types of survey methods used in the same geographic area (Miller et al., 1997). In this study, the researchers examined the use of a previous random-digit-dial survey used in the same area of a predominantly African-American neighborhood in the city. The use of the telephone survey to reach a hard to find, marginalized population leads to response bias with an increase in respondents in higher social-economic areas, and in fact would be impossible to use for homeless populations, but sheds light on the utility of the street intercept survey method. Using a street intercept survey in the same area of Baltimore, Miller et al. (1997) attempted to examine the feasibility of the street intercept survey. In an attempt to randomize the selection of areas to conduct the street-intercept survey, Miller et al. (1997) acquired census data of all 3,384 blocks within the city. This was used as a sampling frame for the study.

Electronic randomization of the city blocks was applied to the sampling frame to create a cluster sampling modification that allowed for the greater feasibility of conducting interviews around the city. After selecting the specific sampling frame, great consideration was given the type and training of each interviewer. Teams of six to eight African-Americans native to the area were created and trained specifically for the street intercept interview process. A supervisor was applied to each group and a specific protocol of working in pairs was applied for the safety of the interviewers. The interviewers specifically sought any African-American individuals present on their assigned street blocks. Interviewers sought out any individuals who were at least 18 years of age and willing to consent to the interview. Estimation of age, gender, and reason for refusal was implied by interviewers of individuals refusing to take the survey. In what
could be one of the greatest considerations for interviewers applying the street intercept method to homeless populations; interviewers were educated and trained in avoiding unsafe situations due to intoxicated or threatening individuals. As I have already discussed earlier, cultural competency by the interviewers seeking out marginalized populations is important to the success of the research, but it is also important to the safety of the interviewers conducting the research as well. Consideration of the safety of the researchers was finally completed by the use of conducting interviews during daytime hours between 9 am and 3 pm.

The results of the street intercept study were then compared to that of the previous telephone survey. During the street intercept survey, 994 surveys were conducted among 395 different city blocks. Reports of avoided interviews were present among 18 interviewers due to a lack of safety and concerns of public intoxication. These problems, when compared to the Biopsychosocial Risk Factors discussed earlier in the paper, apply directly to the use of possible street intercept surveys of homeless populations. Finally, Miller et al. (1997) compared the results of the previous telephone survey, with a response rate of 61.3% (928/1514), to the response rate of the street intercept survey of 85.6% (794/928).

An obvious increase in response rate was reported by Miller et al., (1997) yet several limitations to the methodology were present that directly relate to the possible use of street intercept surveys. First, the use of cluster sampling adds a greater possibility of sampling error to the study. The second and most important limitation to the use of street intercept methodology is the biases of interviewers’ skipping undesirable respondents. Although Miller et al. (1997) gave great consideration to the training and cultural
competency of the interviewers, the human nature of caring for personal safety adds a
greater chance of passing on a possible respondent because they seem unsafe to approach.
The best possible method to decrease this type of bias in the use of street intercept
surveys with marginalized hard to reach populations is extensive documentation by each
interviewer of not only the surveys administered, but by also of each avoided survey.

When considering the vulnerable nature of homeless populations in the U.S., and
those around the world, surveying techniques are extremely varied. The first
consideration of anyone attempting to research homeless or vulnerable populations
should be the competency of the specific region, and the population within that region.
First, the cultural competency of the specific region is greatly needed to create a decent
representative sample of the population. The technique of using multiple sampling frames
with multiple groups of interviewers is highly important. However, the availability of
resources like time and money severely affects the outcome and usability of the sampling
frames. The number of resources available to the researcher should guide the initial
structure of the research. If there is a greater availability of time, personnel, and training,
a full-scale representative sampling methodology could be applied to gain a larger
understanding of the population. However, if a large number of resources are not as
readily available; a street intercept methodology could be applied to help combat the lack
of resources. For smaller-scale studies with limited resources, a street intercept method
should allow for a greater opportunity to succeed in representing the sample.

The professional and cultural competency of the interviewers themselves applies
directly to how well the eventual sample will correspond to the results of the survey. If
issues like avoidance or refusal extend deeply throughout the research, the
generalizability of the research can be greatly affected. Again, while resources like time and money might dictate the eventual success of a research project; the full consideration of them should be applied to guide the safety of both the researchers and the participants in the study.

**Probability Sampling Techniques**

The development of more efficient probability sampling techniques has continued to grow over the past decade, with many researchers turning to approaches in which samples can be extrapolated, e.g. allowing the production of unbiased estimators with a calculable variance (Marpsat & Razafindratsima, 2010). These probability-sampling techniques are of interest to this study and will be discussed at further length. In particular, utilizing the time-location sampling (TLS) and the respondent-driven sampling (RDS) methods will be of focus.

Use of sampling techniques like TLS and RDS is required because there is a lack of distinct sampling frame (total knowledge of the sample representing the population). In short, there is no way to assume you could use a simple random sample technique because there is no sampling frame that can accurately represent a hidden or hard to reach sample.

**Respondent Driven Sampling**

Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS) is a mix of qualitative snowball sampling and quantitative sample weights. The snowball sampling contribution is the way respondents are contacted for the sample, meaning that there is a “rolling” effect of one respondent finding another, and so forth. This is needed because the respondents and/or the population is hidden or hard to reach. The sample weights contribution is accounting
for the lack of a sampling frame or a thorough understanding of the size/shape/characteristics of the sample and population. This is needed because most quantitative methods assume that the sample is a random sample taken from a known sampling frame. RDS combines snowball sampling and probability survey sampling by using the “snowball” process of getting individuals to refer those they know to the study and then using a mathematical model that weights the sample to compensate for the fact that the sample was collected in a non-random way (Heckathorn, 1997).

**Time Location Sampling**

Time Location Sampling (TLS) works like most other cluster sampling methods, meaning that there is some sort of “natural occurring clusters”, like schools, classrooms, districts that need to be accounted for because there might be some sort of similarities between the responses. In the case of HTRP, the natural accruing clusters are the homeless shelters, gathering places, or other locations that homeless individuals assemble. The idea is that over time, there are multiple chances to sample individuals in these locations that would otherwise be hidden or difficult to sample. The location data, or the responses at each location at a given time are treated as clusters and treated as the random cluster observations at each period of time to create a probability sample of the population (Karon & Wejnert, 2014). TLS works like multistage cluster sampling by constructing sampling frames from the locations at different periods. TLS is an effective method for obtaining probability samples of populations who can be located at different known areas, so it has relevance to the homeless populations in areas where shelters, food banks, and other social services are commonly used by the population.
The decision to use either of the probability sampling methods like RDS or TLS depends on the history of the area, the use of social resources, and the familiarity of the area by the researchers. While the validity of the statistical analysis is based on proven methods (Kendall, et al., 2008), the generalizability is sometimes questioned when there is a chance of samples being too similar to each other or adding collinearity to the probability equation (Sabin & Johnston, 2014).

**Summary of Chapter II**

Hidden populations are unique in the sense that they are simultaneously concealed and present in their respective areas. Somehow there is an existing population, yet it is hidden and hard to reach which makes it difficult to understand. How do we know that the population is even there, that it even exists, that it has a people, culture, rules, norms…? What methods can we use to study a population that has no actual sampling frame to observe and study? The simple idea that there are populations that are hidden and hard to locate is the problem. For methodologists, researchers, social care providers, and anyone else that might want to sample a hidden population there is no easy answer. For the homeless, researchers of the homeless, and homeless care providers there is a similar problem: how do you correctly sample a hidden population.

Homelessness in the U.S. is a problem. Current and recent literature shows us the changing dynamic of homelessness with an increase in women, children, and families. Homelessness in major metropolitan areas is on a constant news cycle. There has yet to be an “answer” to the homeless problem in any real sense. The need to continued evaluation of social outreach programs, and to continue to develop ways to accurately
measure both the amount of homeless people and to understand their condition should continue to be a major priority of until there is an “answer” to the problem.

The problem with simply going out and surveying the amount of homeless and what factors might be contributing to their homelessness is that there is no easy way to do so. Traditional sampling methods would work effectively if there was a known sampling frame of the homeless in each town, city or state; but the essence of the problem is that they are hidden and hard to reach. Social conditions, such as experiences and culture become a bigger issue in understanding how to research the homeless accurately than does a well-defined statistical model based on a simple random sample. The use of non-probability sampling methods like key informant and snowball sampling provides researchers with an outlet to find and research the homeless. However, there remains to be no consensus on what methods are best for each sample, and how culture, norms, rules and person-to-person dynamics affect each study.

Understanding the current condition of the homeless populations and how researchers are working to study the homeless leads this research to the next chapter where I propose a research design to examine what methodological considerations stakeholders in homeless research (people experiencing homelessness, researchers, social care providers, etc) identify with hidden population sampling methods.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In this Chapter, I proposed a research study through which I examined the current sampling methods employed to research hidden populations, with an emphasis on the homeless population. Methodological considerations of homeless population research from the point of view of homeless research experts were of emphasis. In this study, I considered all people that could be involved in research with homeless populations from the individual experiencing homelessness to the housed researcher. I treated all of these people as potential experts in the field of homeless research. Using a critical theoretical framework, I consider the best methods for examining methodological considerations to include all people involved in the homeless phenomena, grounded in the idea that all stakeholders share a wealth of advice that is impactful to research with the homeless.

In this chapter, I start with a recap of the problem, purpose, rationale, and research questions, followed with a description of the research design including the theoretical perspective, researcher stance, methodological framework, data collection, and strategies to enhance trustworthiness. Further procedural examination of qualitative reflexivity methodology and research ethics with homeless populations was also given.

The main problem was if the behavior of the population of interest was not known then it makes it extremely difficult to access members. Current sampling methods that
were being applied lack accuracy in sampling techniques due to not having a truly defined sampling frame with a ‘one-size-fits-all’ methodological sampling approach.

The purpose of this study was to: (a) gain a methodological understanding of hidden population sampling techniques in order to offer insight into which approach is best suited for a given researchers sample; and (b) provide increased methodological understanding of how to best research hidden populations like the homeless to provide researchers, social care providers, and governing bodies with detailed guidelines for their work with the homeless.

Sampling hidden populations, like people who are homeless, are hard to generalize from statistically due to their hidden or unknown lifestyles. The methodological problems that arise from this broader issue may be seen in the sampling approaches that were utilized currently. Therefore, the rationale of this study, using a critical theory approach, was to create a methodological guide for researchers, social care providers and governing bodies to follow when conducting sampling of and research with homeless populations due to the lack of an overarching methodological guideline to follow. Data extrapolation techniques must happen for researchers to generalize from a sample to a population, and to do so effectively researchers must be willing to take the time and energy to turn the inquisitive lens back on themselves and study the methodologies being used.

As stated in Chapter I, the research questions that guided this study were:

Q1 What methodological considerations do stakeholders in homeless research identify with hidden-population sampling methods?

Q2 What areas for ethical consideration do stakeholders of homeless research with hidden-populations identify with hard-to-reach sampling methods?
Q3 How does the exploration of the researcher’s history, position and reflexivity impact this research?

Theoretical Perspective

A critical theory approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) was utilized as the theoretical stance in this study. Creswell & Creswell (2017) defined critical theory as the empowerment of human beings to give the researcher the ability to look beyond the constraints of race, class, and gender. They defined this stance as critical because it is thought of as questioning the status quo. The qualitative research dictionary definition of critical theory was a reconstruction of the social world and its boundaries (Schwandt, 2014). Critical theorists do not have time to define critical theory, discussing boundaries in overt empirical definitions is none of their concern. Instead, critical theorists value theoretical practice and work that has been examined through a critical lens. It is the kind of theory that applies "critique" from the onset of the research based on preexisting knowledge to find the radical thoughts, contradictions, and shortcomings with the goal of being to find untapped knowledge. Crotty (1998) defined critical theory as a contradiction between the researcher and the world surrounding the researcher. The critical theorist knows that people experiencing homelessness have a "voice", but that their research participants do not have a platform for their voices to be heard. Therefore, the work of the critical theorist is to amplify the voices of research participants. Crotty described critical theory as a story about humanity's goal to learn from the present and not just from the past. The past has been written, it is history in its definition. How can we engage in the research critically if we are defined by the past and the history that someone else has written? The lens of which the critical theorist uses to conduct research contradicts that which is already known with that which presently can be shown.
Moreover, the critical theorist seeks to change the current situation with data, observation, artifacts, and voices. My representation of critical theory was that the researcher should aim to approach the research context with eyes wide open, looking for movement in the data, marking every change that differs from the status quo. I believe that critical researchers want to change the situation based on observable behaviors, movements, sounds, actions, writings, and so forth. The critical theorist knows from the outset that something does not fit, that something does not look right. Blatantly seeing all of the possible angles of bias. The critical theorist aims to change the situation by providing a platform for voices in these data to be heard, whether it be collected or observed. They need evidence, they need stories, and they need action. They do not rely on the past to look back empirically and make judgments about the present or future. Their aim is to find research that needs assistance in amplifying its voice.

I do not believe that the perspective of critical theorists, one that is looking for something in these data can be without bias, meaning that the critical person should answer my idea of “eyes wide open” with the stance that my eyes will see what is needed because I am looking for the answers already. My theoretical position, and furthermore researcher’s lens was one that knows the world is not static, that the actions of people, of groups, and objects are constantly variable, and that we can only be lucky enough to have the patience and skill to study them with the utmost care and concern.

Specifically, addressing the research at hand, it was critical at many levels. First, in the choice of hidden populations, why were homeless persons considered part of a hidden population? In most large towns across the world, homeless people are panhandling, walking around, sitting in parks, and even creating shelters in clear and
open sight to everyone. Yet, we fail to understand the condition of homelessness enough to "solve the social problem"—we fail to “see” people who are homeless as we turn a blind eye. Second, in the in-depth exploration of a group, homeless people, I explored their social and personal exclusion from society. Homeless people are inherently part of class issues in society. The health and generosity of a nation may be seen through its treatment of the homeless. Third, sampling methods for hidden groups are often driven by government regulations (as seen in Chapter II). Examining the efficacy of these methods and providing a comprehensive methodological resource to stakeholders provides a much-needed social instrument for researching homeless populations. Fourth, I position myself firmly as someone who was once part of a hidden sample, which I explicated in the following section. These were the primary reasons this study was critical.

**Researcher Stance**

My history as a research consultant has been rich in work with both quantitative and qualitative methods. I have consulted on a wide range of quantitative researches involving psychometric analysis, survey analysis, and linear models; along with qualitative researchers using a multitude of methodologies including case study, narrative, ethnography, and grounded theory. Qualitative methodologists believe a researcher’s transparency about their bias enhances the trustworthiness of a study. The approach I use as a research consultant when explaining the importance of the researcher’s stance within the methods section of a research study is that the researcher must provide the lens that their eyes are using to conduct the data collection.
Creswell and Miller (2000) state that the researcher's lens is used as a method for validating the study. What this means is that if the readers of the research wants to generalize, or as I like to say "keep" any of the information from the findings of the research, they must fully understand the assumptions that the researcher has about the paradigm in question. I explain this idea to my consultees with a simple example of where someone chooses to get their daily news. If you are a conservative person, you most likely look to a conservative news source to get your daily information because you agree with the position, or lens, that the news source is using. You do not need to read about the author or define each section of each story in the context of conservative thought, because you know the lens that the new source is working from. The same holds true of the same conservative person absorbing news from a liberal media outlet. The conservative person knows the lens of the liberal news source and can take what they want from the story based on the lens of the news source. They can use their lens to define the story based on the knowledge of the news source.

Humans have the ability to build a personal narrative that defines the way they see the world, and thus people see the world differently. This directly applies to the idea of research. The consumer of the research, or in this case, the reader, must know the lens that the researcher uses when collecting the data and transferring the findings to create the narrative of the research. The readers can then make an informed decision about the research with their lens, with the information they need to define each section of the research in the context of their life, their experiences, and their knowledge. It is within this methodological stance on reflexivity that my research stance is nested.
My personal history has a profound impact on my research stance. In the summer and fall of 1999, I was a homeless teenager in the greater Northern California, Oregon, and Washington area of the United States. I have experienced the homeless condition for myself. I have spent time panhandling, visiting shelters, and food banks as a homeless individual. While my situation was that of a homeless teenager, my experience was different from others. While I did not choose to be homeless, I did have readily available resources to help with my exit from being homeless. In short, I was able to receive resources from my family in Colorado once I was no longer mentally or physically able to deal with my condition of living on the streets. This is not to say at all that this was an easy task, or that I was simply living out on the streets for fun. What I mean to say is that I tried to make a life for my own on the West Coast away from my immediate family, quickly became homeless, and did my best to survive with the given situation. I am lucky that I had family willing to take me back in and provide for me when I was unable. I am well aware that I had the benefit of being eighteen years old when I came off the streets, and other than some serious boot-rot, I had no long-term health problems from nearly six months on the streets.

This is not the case for the majority of my friends and acquaintances that I knew while homeless. They had no one to call or were actively hiding from those people that society would assume would be there to provide for them. They, for the most part, suffered serious physical and emotional health conditions from living on the streets. My stance is that I understand the awfully hard condition of the homeless person, and the extreme amount of effort that it takes to help the homeless survive or end their homelessness.
Furthermore, I need to share my extremely positive experiences as a homeless individual. While I did see and experience many negative issues like hunger, violence, abuse, legal trouble, and so forth, I generally had interactions with people that went above and beyond that of kindness. Many times, I received help from strangers in the form of money, food, and shelter. I saw and experienced many homeless individuals give up their last bit of resources to someone else without a hint of wanted reciprocity. I lived as a traveling nomad free from the boundaries of society for a short period of life, and I learned more during this time than countless hours of college classroom education have ever taught me. My stance is also one of understanding why someone would choose to be homeless, not being from a stance of actively wanting to end all homelessness.

Participant Stakeholders

For the purpose of this research, I referred to the participants as a group, terming them stakeholders. Patton (2011) defines stakeholders as implicit or explicit receivers of outcomes from evaluation research, often considering the general public themselves as stakeholders. It is from the context of formulated evaluation techniques that I have borrowed the term stakeholders. While this dissertation research does not fit the boundaries of a professional evaluation, the ultimate goal was to increase the sampling methodology for the entire body of hidden and homeless research experts, from the homeless person to the highly educated researcher and to consider research with the homeless from the perspectives of the stakeholders. Homelessness is not a static issue, and neither are the experts in the many different research scenarios.

The stakeholders consisted of experts and or participants of research with homeless populations. These participant experts were from four distinct groups.
recruited expert homeless-population researchers. All researcher participants had experience with multiple research projects sampling and collecting data from homeless populations. Second, I recruited active social care providers, who work in-depth with daily with homeless populations. Examples of social care providers include homeless shelter staff, social workers, and social care network administrators. Third, and most importantly, I recruited long-term and episodic persons experiencing homelessness to gain a much needed and lacking insider perspective on the issue of sampling hidden populations. Fourth, and finally, as a formerly homeless youth, and as an IRB regulated researcher of hidden and homeless populations, I critically reflected my perception of these issues before, during and after the data collection. Table 3.1 below provides and a detailed breakdown of the participant's role as a stakeholder, location, and pseudonym.

Hidden population research experts were recruited by identifying them through their publications and previous research known to myself and other research experts in the field of homeless research. Social care providers were recruited through the identification of social care networks such as day-shelters, overnight-shelters, rescue missions, and social care centers. I then contacted each social care network through email, phone call, or on-site visit. Persons experiencing homelessness were recruited through on-site visits to shelters and gathering places for homeless individuals. Five of the participants experiencing homelessness were recommended by the manager of the day shelter I was working out of. The other five were recruited through personal introduction in a public space outside of an overnight shelter.
Table 3.1

Participants' Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P1</td>
<td>Texas</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Rural City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P2</td>
<td>Jeffro Gets</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Rural City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P3</td>
<td>Tree</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Rural City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P4</td>
<td>Poison Ivy</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Rural City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P5</td>
<td>Matt-Man</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Rural City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P6</td>
<td>Grandma</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Rural City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P7</td>
<td>Shopping Cart</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Rural City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P8</td>
<td>Mountain Man</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Rural City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P9</td>
<td>Slim Jim</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Rural City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P10</td>
<td>LeLe</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
<td>Rural City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P11</td>
<td>Graduate</td>
<td>Research Expert</td>
<td>Rural University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P12</td>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>Research Expert</td>
<td>Midwest University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P13</td>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>Research Expert</td>
<td>Urban University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P14</td>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Program Director</td>
<td>Rural City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P15</td>
<td>Songbird</td>
<td>Program Director</td>
<td>Rural City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P16</td>
<td>Officer</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Urban City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P17</td>
<td>Caretaker</td>
<td>Care Provider</td>
<td>Urban City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P18</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Executive</td>
<td>Urban City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P19</td>
<td>Programmer</td>
<td>Data Manager</td>
<td>Urban City</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P20</td>
<td>Chef</td>
<td>Service Manager</td>
<td>Urban City</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Gender, age, and race/ethnicity are not shown to protect participants’ identity

During the proposal stage of this research, I had attempted to contact and interview visual artists that work with hidden and homeless populations. Unfortunately, I was unable to reach photographic visual artists during the timeframe of the research, and was respectively declined by a motion picture visual artist due to their self-reported belief that they did not have enough experience to adequately answer my questions.

I conducted twenty interviews in total, with an emphasis on interviewing at least 10 persons experiencing homelessness. A detailed description of each participant is provided in Chapter IV.
In-Depth Interviews

To gain expert perspectives researching the homeless I conducted multiple in-depth interviews with the stakeholders. I utilized information about the homeless included in Chapter II, and my personal experience as a person who was homeless and a researcher of the homeless to guide the line of interview questions (see appendix A for the interview guide). Semi-structured interviews (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) were employed to guide each interview with the homeless population stakeholders. For the interviews with the visual artists and homeless persons, the goal was to create a rich conversation with each participant that provided the stakeholder room to tell their story as they want it to be told. The narrative of each stakeholder, from the researcher the person experiencing homelessness, will be the unique type of data that sets this research apart from that of the traditional study.

This was a methodological study through which I aimed to provide research practitioner's detailed information about issues related to sampling the homeless, and the perspective of the homeless themselves regarding how best to research them. This is the type of data that can potentially benefit the methodological literature the most. The cultural significance of this type of data can be extremely important to researchers unfamiliar with homeless populations. For example, from my experience being and working with the homeless, it is the culture to always provide compensation for any services provided by the homeless person. This could be for a photograph, a conversation, or something created (song, artwork, etc.). This does not stem from any type of greed or manipulation, but from the fact that homeless persons have no other form of equity than themselves. Their person, persona, image, information, and likeness are
their primary form of a bank account, property, or income. This is important for researchers to understand when attempting to create culturally responsive and ethical research with homeless people (Roche, et al. in Lahman, 2017). Therefore, payment of twenty dollars an interview will be given to the homeless participants for their time and information.

**Observational Data Collection**

I participated in a National Point-In-Time homeless data survey for a large social care network. No interviews were conducted during the participation. However, observational data and personal reflection of the experience were recorded and are detailed in Chapter IV.

**Data Analysis**

Analysis of the data collected from the stakeholders was focused on salient themes, with an emphasis on the methodological context of the themes. The utility of this research for the purpose of an applied methodological framework for future work with the population was the foundation of the data analysis. Thematic analysis is defined by Creswell & Creswell (2017) as a systematic procedure for coding data into themes that represent the phenomena of interest. In the case of this research, the phenomenon is the homeless population sampling methods, and how the stakeholders speak to the best ways to be accurate, culturally representative, and ethical in their research. One benefit of using thematic analysis for this research is its use within many different types of theoretical frameworks (Terry, Hayfield, Clarke, & Braun, 2017). The value of using thematic analysis for this research is that it provides a flexible framework to understand the homeless condition and its position within the context of being a hidden population.
While I am using a critical lens in this research, and have outlined my critical stance about homelessness and homeless research above, the thematic analysis provided an opportunity for the data to "speak" from the viewpoint of all stakeholders involved in the research. Applying the thematic analysis approach was important for this research because of its flexibility to generate themes from stakeholders and situations that were very different from each other like persons who are experiencing homelessness and those that are housed (Braun, Clarke, & Weate, 2016). As mentioned above, the focus of this research is to provide methodological recommendations to other researchers and social care providers. While traditional qualitative data analysis will be appropriate for a portion of the data, there will also be a focus on the practicality and utilization of each finding. How can the researcher best approach the sampling of the homeless? How can the researcher better appreciate the reason that a homeless individual would want to remain hidden and still elicit genuine information from the data collection? How does the homeless individual consider the impact of research on their daily way of life? Salient themes between groups (researchers, homeless persons, etc.) will be just as important as themes within each group. The thematic analysis provides the best method to search for emerging themes from all levels of the stakeholders in the data. Figure 3.1 shows a flow chart illustrating a detailed analysis of the data collection types, focus, analysis, and integrated results.
Figure 3.1. Data Analysis Flow Chart illustrating a detailed analysis of the data collection types, focus, analysis, and integrated results.

**Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness in qualitative research may be described as the way we can determine the integrity and reliability of the research. Trustworthiness can be broken down into four categories: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Guba, 1981). These four criteria were described in depth by Lincoln and Guba (1986). To enhance the credibility of the current study I applied the methods under the realm of qualitative research proposed by Creswell & Creswell (2017) which are: member check, peer check, and the triangulation of sources (i.e. consistency of different data sources).
These traditional trustworthiness methods were employed to enhance the reliability and validity of the data or the findings and recommendations from the research.

However, there were issues pertaining to some of the participants that did not lend easily to traditional trustworthiness methods. Specifically, due to the mobile nature of this group member checks for the persons experiencing homelessness have not been completed for any of the research participants. Following the work of Morse (2015), member checking was conducted during the collection of data with homeless stakeholders to try and enhance the rigor of the study. This was done by summarizing the conversation with each participant at the end of each interview. Member checks with research experts and social care providers consisted of providing transcripts of recorded interviews and a summary of any codes, themes and/or interpretations from their interviews.

Peer checks were conducted throughout the process with two methodological research peers and my research chair. As salient themes emerge from the data analysis process, I confirmed the findings with the selected peers. Re-evaluation of the data based on the findings and conversations with each peer was used to solidify each theme and were used in the process of determining if each theme was salient and complete. Word documents, artifacts, and summaries from the data analysis were provided to each peer to enhance the trustworthiness of the data.

The second criterion proposed by Guba (1981) was transferability. Sufficient detail (i.e. a thick description) of the participants and their settings and situations provides external validity or transferability of the study. I believe that the transferability of this study was enhanced through the process of writing the results of the data collected.
By providing an accurate and ample amount of detail of the phenomenon, the main conclusions drawn from the analysis can be transferable to other similar situations.

The next criterion supporting the study was the dependability of the data. The developers of the criterion recommend validating that the findings are “consistent and could be repeated” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). To demonstrate this I have provided evidence to support the findings and the process used to produce the findings to ensure that my methods are consistent and could be repeated.

Confirmability was the last criterion utilized to maximize trustworthiness. For this criterion, I used three methods: an audit trail, triangulation, and reflexivity. Note that some of the methods for one criterion do overlap with other methods (e.g. triangulation can be used to affirm the study’s credibility as well as its confirmability).

The audit trail, consisting of records of my actions, collection of relevant artifacts, and a researcher journal were completed during the research and provide transparency and rigor to the research. Furthermore, the use of an audit trail allowed for the opportunity to reflect and journal my experiences with the data collection process and the participants to record my reflexivity in the research. Journaling my personal experiences with each participant and research situation was used to better strategize the quality control of the research (Berger, 2015).

The use of multiple perspectives, i.e.: all stakeholders in the study provided the opportunity for a thick and rich description of the methodological issues surrounding surveying homeless populations. As I mentioned before, the fact that emerging themes can be “cross-referenced” between stakeholders offered a unique and robust opportunity to understanding the methodological issues. Understanding the relevance of lived
experience for the persons experiencing homelessness, as part of the homeless community, and as part of a greater housed community was vital to understanding the best methodology for a researcher to apply when attempting to collect valid and reliable data from persons experiencing homelessness.

Reflexivity was integral to this research in two distinct ways: first, as a process of trustworthiness and triangulation of the findings, and second, as a data analysis tool to help examine the methodological process of the reflexivity in research. Reflexivity, as a process of self-examination in qualitative research, is well established as a form of validation of findings. In this research, reflexivity findings were overlaid and recorded during the data analysis. Providing a careful reflection of the researcher’s role in the study not only provides the opportunity for the researcher to cross-reference their findings, but it also provides potential readers of the research an opportunity to verify the findings to the opinions, thoughts, feelings, and social-cultural interactions of the researcher to the findings. During the research, a self-reflective examination of my history as a homeless teenager, my work as a homeless advocate, and as a graduate student working with homeless populations were employed.

While reflexivity was a substantial piece of the trustworthiness and data analysis of the research, further emphasis was given to the better understanding of the methodology of the reflexivity process itself. Much work has been done on the traditional concept of reflexivity and it relates to emotional, epistemological, and ontological understanding of the researcher's position in the research (Denzin, 1983; Mauthner & Doucet, 2003). However, new research has asked researchers to think outside of the box and add a level of imagination, social position, and history directly related to current and
past experiences to the researcher's reflexive writings (Berger, 2015; Gabriel, 2015). Pulling from my experience as a researcher, research consultant, professional evaluator, and using my unique social-cultural experiences, I used reflexivity to both better understand this research project and to create methodological strategies to answer the research question that follows RQ 3: How does the exploration of the researcher's history, position and reflexivity impact the research?

In Chapter IV I present my reflexivity in two distinct ways. First, I insert my reflexivity as a researcher as an overlay throughout the data analysis to add context to the data analysis and my role as a researcher. Second, I present thematic reflexive themes that were present throughout the reflexive data set. All reflections from the researcher in Chapter IV are presented with a heading reflection from researcher.

**Ethics**

As part of my training as a researcher I have completed an IRB training with CITI, a one-credit hour graduate course on human research ethics, and co-taught said course for 3 semesters. As part of this course I developed an aspirational research ethics stance which has been published in a social science research ethics text (Lahman, 2017). These experiences were foundational to my human research ethics understanding. Furthermore, during my time teaching research ethics I helped many students formulate their ethical stance, often in culturally responsive areas such as youth, transgender, LGBT people, Indigenous persons, West Africans, and so on. Discussion of ethical dilemmas, research positions, and the history of ethical research is a cornerstone of my work as a graduate student, as a graduate teaching assistant, and as a research professional.
As a research methodologist, ethical issues have a deep and abiding interest for me. Therefore, I have also developed a research question specifically on ethics that follows RQ2: What areas for ethical consideration do stakeholders of homeless research with hidden-populations identify with hard-to-reach sampling methods? This question was investigated through the in-depth interviews described above and through the reflexive journaling.

**Summary of Chapter III**

Through this research, I provide a foundation for rigorous, ethical, and valid research with hidden and homeless populations. Using hidden population sampling as a starting point for methodological practice, and focusing on the stakeholder relationship between people experiencing homelessness, homeless researchers, and social care providers; this study provides critical research findings on methodological consideration of sampling homeless populations. Furthermore, this research also provides a unique reflexive methodological analysis of the multi-dimensionality of reflexivity from a sociocultural and methodological context.
CHAPTER IV

You can’t reference it as a singular population, like ‘the homeless’, because there's so many different types of groups that can relate. Based on my understanding, there’s so many things that can impact their lived experience, the boundaries inherent with the aspects of homelessness, resources available and stuff like that, as well as levels of visibility. I think it's very different for someone who's first time homeless, for situational stressors, and being able to access resources near them, or someone who might have serious mental health issues that got them kicked out of shelters and might be getting in the way. So, I think there's varying levels, hidden aspects of homelessness based on an individual level.

– Wisconsin (a researcher)

FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to (a) gain a methodological understanding of hidden population sampling techniques in order to offer insight into which approach is best suited for a given researcher’s sample; and (b) to provide increased methodological understanding of how to best research hidden populations like the homeless by providing detailed guidelines to those who work with the homeless. The goal of the research was to use the understandings of homeless population experts, or stakeholders, to enhance the way current hidden population sampling methodology occurs in research.

Findings from this study will be useful to researchers, social care providers, governing bodies, and other professionals seeking a better understanding of how to sample and research homeless populations. The findings from the data are intended to challenge the reader, researchers, and social care providers with a critical view of the
methodological process. Findings from this study were designed to be informative and practical for all stakeholders in the homeless research realm.

Reflection from researcher:

This analysis took a big swing away from what I thought it would be. I thought this would be a meta piece about sampling methods and what people used, how they used them. I know I’m calling everyone stakeholders, but that’s just fodder now, it’s true, but they’re people, not stakeholders. No one cares about the difference between random sampling and snowball sampling… not even the researchers. Who cares when the stakes are so high? The first time Texas (person experiencing homelessness) started crying in our interview, my very first interview, I was like what the hell is happening?! I'm not ready for this. We're supposed to be talking about sampling considerations, and best practices to consider their role in the outcome of research…. What is this all of a sudden? I'm sitting in a strange office inside of a homeless shelter I just walked into for the first time a couple of hours ago and now Texas is in full-blown crying mode about how they became homeless? I didn't even ask that question? We were talking about pseudonyms two seconds ago. How am I supposed to handle this now? Are there tissues in this office? Should I say something? Should I ignore it? Should I respond with something generic like I'm sorry you're crying, here's a Kleenex! How in the hell is this going to help me…? Already I’ve separated myself from the crying person in front of me…. How in the hell does this answer my research question! Ok, never mind, just shut up and listen…

Demographics of Participants

In total, 20 participants were interviewed and contributed to the findings of this study. Usual demographics such as age, gender identity, and race/ethnicity were not collected due to the vulnerability of the population. However, the participants were divided into three groups based on their role within the homelessness community. The first group of interviewees was comprised of the following:

Ten Persons Experiencing Homelessness – All names are pseudonyms agreed upon by participants and me. These 10 participants were interviewed between December 2018 and February 2019 in the western US. A list of pseudonyms for each participant is provided in Chapter Three in Table 3.1. The second group of participants that I interviewed was
Three Research Experts – Graduate and Professor were interviewed in person. Wisconsin was interviewed over phone call. The third group of participants that I interviewed was seven social care providers – all of this data was collected through face-to-face interviews. Leader and Songbird were from a rural city. Officer, Caretaker, Management, Programmer, and Chef – all work for a major urban homeless care network. A detailed description of each participant is provided below. For stakeholders experiencing homelessness, I have provided the self-reported reason for current homelessness.

**Persons Experiencing Homelessness**

I hate this more than anything (crying)... I’ve been on the housing list for like six years or more, and I mean it’s hard you know. I mean it really is. I hate this life. I hate living out of a bag. I mean, I've had places to stay, but I haven't had a home in like… it's been almost nine years now, or eight years, and it sucks. – Texas (a person experiencing homelessness)

Texas has been precariously sheltered for 9 years, or possibly more. They were very open to talking about their past experiences with homelessness and drug addiction, and the link between the two. They discussed in length their past of being the victim of domestic abuse and how they led to the initial drug addiction and homelessness. Texas was kind, funny, and continually apologized for showing strong emotions, like crying at one point.

I'm here because love fucked me up (laughs)... my girlfriend left…well, drugs are involved too. But it was the fact that she left and went to prison and that leaves without, you know, her income and my income. There's all that shit and it only took two months for all that to happen, to get to the way I am right now [homeless]. – Jeffro Gets (a person experiencing homelessness)

Jeffro Gets has been homeless for a few months, and spoke briefly about previous experiences with episodic homelessness. Jeffro had a very strong demeanor and a very
solid handshake, but was soft-spoken and caring throughout the interview. Jeffro’s hands were stained with charcoal-colored grease like you would see from a car mechanic.

I'm homeless again now because I had a falling out with my girlfriend and her landlord. – Tree (a person experiencing homelessness)

Tree had been homeless for the last few months and precariously housed for more than a decade before that. Tree lost their home in 2008 after a knee injury stopped them from being able to work. Tree was very tall, very large, and wore full-body work coveralls. Tree spoke in depth about the struggles with maintaining housing and resources with a fixed social security check.

I don’t have to be homeless. I can get a place for free because of the baby, over at the church, but I don’t want to be away from him (Matt-Man, their partner). – Poison Ivy (a person experiencing homelessness)

Poison Ivy (and Matt-Man) had been homeless for over 6 months after leaving their hometown in the mid-west to relocate in the western US. They spoke openly about how they didn't have any plans to find permanent housing when they arrived in the west, but Poison Ivy was now pregnant and expecting within the next couple of months. They both left a self-described "bad-situation" before coming to the west and had no intention of returning. They openly talked about their want to stay hidden and not be perceived as homeless. They had a unique dilemma of staying together sleeping outdoors in the woods or separating so that Poison Ivy could access the much better social care networks for pregnant women. They spoke openly about the pregnancy but didn't elaborate about plans after the birth of the child in terms of housing.

We came here to get away from all the trouble back home in (Midwestern State). We had to leave. I needed mental healthcare. I needed to be in the mountains. I wake up in the mountains and they're purple, and I called my mom… and I call
her and she says so you've seen purple mountains’ majesty (laughing)! – Matt-Man (a person experiencing homelessness)

Matt-Man (and Poison Ivy) had been homeless for over 6 months after leaving their hometown in the mid-west to relocate to the western US. Matt-Man talked fast and had a very thick southern accent. They were very funny, light-hearted, and at the same time very serious. They spoke openly about their struggles with mental illness, specifically anxiety and PTSD. They shared stories about bad experiences with pharmaceutical medications to help with their issues, and they preferred using marijuana to help with the anxiety and PTSD symptoms. They spoke multiple times about wanting to work in the social care field and help give back to those that needed the kind of help they did.

I didn’t want to put that on my daughter anymore, so I left. I’ve been in and out of transitional shelters since. That was about 9 months ago. – Grandma (a person experiencing homelessness)

Grandma had been precariously housed for more than a decade, going in-between family and friend's houses since they left their partner many years ago. They were friendly and short-spoken. They did not give long explanations to any of my questions, but seemed to be complete about their answers. They were very familiar with the social care network in their area, and had a deep understanding of the rules and regulations that went with keeping in good standing with the particular shelter we were at that day.

I just ended up out in the park after I got kicked out of my parent's place the last time. Now I have a shopping cart for a home (laughing). – Shopping Cart (a person experiencing homelessness)

Shopping Cart had been homeless for "a long time". They were young, but had been living outside for multiple winters in a mountain climate. They had a shopping cart that
they spoke of openly and joked that they had everything they owned on the cart. They showed me a self-made attachment to the handles of the shopping cart that held a series of candles that they would use to keep their hands warm and use as a headlight at night. They were well-spoken, but didn't finish many of their thoughts, as they tended to get distracted and ask questions.

I just been living in the mountains since 2006. I’m not really homeless, like city homeless. I got my places in the woods nobody knows about but me. – Mountain Man (a person experiencing homelessness)

Mountain Man had been living hidden for many years and spoke specifically about the decision to live outdoors starting in 2006. They wore many layers of clothing, including multiple shirts, sweatshirts, and a thick jacket, all at the same time. They did not call themselves homeless but referred to their camps and "houses" in the woods. They smiled and laughed throughout the entire interview, and were very complimentary of the social services in the area. They were well known to others that I spoke to during this research project and talked about how they would do anything they could to help others.

I’m homeless because I want to be homeless. I’m a traveler. I’m just here for a little while. – Slim Jim (a person experiencing homelessness)

Slim Jim had been traveling for 3 or 4 years and had been through the western US multiple times throughout that span. They were young and had a dog named Lucky who wore a red bandana around his neck. They were very kind and offered to talk to me only if I would sit outside in the sun with them instead of in the day shelter. They talked about traveling with friends and other "kids" but were currently traveling alone after a falling out in the larger metro area. They spoke openly about staying hidden at night, or from law enforcement, but were very open about panhandling and being as visible as possible when "sparing change" in public. Slim Jim talked about how Lucky got his name because
once they found him their luck asking for money in public changed. They knew they were getting more donations because of Lucky, but said Lucky always ate first and that they would take care of each other. Slim Jim was a very skinny person, tall and lanky. Lucky looked like he was well fed.

“I’ve been homeless for 15 years. I got problems no one can fix. – LeLe (a person experiencing homelessness)

LeLe had been homeless for 15 years. They talked openly about their struggles with mental illness and they hadn’t had stable housing for most of their adult life. Most of LeLe’s hair was grey. LeLe was kind and talked about their fondness of the shelter and the social care network in their area. They talked about sleeping outside but would use the overnight shelters as much as possible. LeLe was not fond of the local law enforcement or the local mayor. They spoke in length about the recent removal of the benches in town in retaliation to the homeless sleeping on them at night. They were often agitated by their own stories, not in a concerning way, but in a passionate way. They were thoughtful, and they seemed concerned about the way they were perceived by the town law enforcement.

Researchers

Professor. Professor was a fulltime professor at a large university in a large metro area. They have over a decade of experience working with homeless populations and have published and presented their work many times. Their research focused on public health, and have a nursing professional background. Their research interests within homeless populations were focused on adolescent health, mental health, and at-risk youth behaviors.
**Wisconsin.** Wisconsin was a practicing psychologist and counselor at a large university in the mid-west. They hold a counseling psychology doctorate, along with a doctoral minor in research methods. They have a history of working with populations with housing and social class challenges. During their graduate work they researched and worked with many homeless populations.

**Graduate.** Graduate was a doctoral student at a mid-sized university in a rural area in the western US. They have an educational background in both quantitative and qualitative research methodologies and have taught both types of methodology at the undergraduate and graduate level as a graduate student. They have experience researching and volunteering with homeless populations.

**Social Care Providers**

**Leader.** Leader was a program director of a homeless outreach center in a mid-to-large rural city. The specific outreach center was open only during the daytime and did not provide any type of overnight care. The shelter did provide resources to the homeless community in the way of free meals, showers, laundry machines, lockers, clothing, and personal hygiene products. The shelter also provided social service counseling and resources to the homeless population like references to services, help with paperwork, and personal guidance. Leader managed the shelter for more than a decade, and had many years of social work experience with homeless populations.

**Songbird.** Songbird was a program director for a rural chapter of a nationwide non-profit coalition of charitable organizations. They oversaw many aspects of social care for people experiencing homelessness including a cold-weather overnight shelter, a year-round overnight shelter, transitional housing, and also coordinate a yearly point-in-
time survey of homelessness. They had worked full time at the same organization for more than 5 years since graduating from college with a bachelor’s degree.

**Officer.** Officer was an administrator for a large faith-based homeless rescue mission in a large metro area in the western US. They have many years of experience working in social care settings and currently work many as a financial administrator for the mission. Their work focus is allocating and distributing resources to the team of social care providers. While they mainly work in an office setting, they have daily interaction with homeless populations through the network of daytime centers, overnight shelters, and transitional housing shelters within the rescue mission.

**Caretaker.** Caretaker was a full-time social care provider at a transitional housing shelter in a large metro area in the western US. They had multiple years of experience in the position and have worked at the same shelter for the last 3 years where they provided intake services to people experiencing homelessness. They commonly worked with people on paperwork for the shelter and have experience working with social care networks, both public and private, helping people experiencing homelessness transition out of the shelter and into their own homes.

**Management.** Management was an executive officer for a large faith-based homeless rescue mission in a large metro area in the western US. They had decades of experience working with non-profits and social care networks and had been working with the same organization for over 8 years. They oversaw a network of daytime centers, overnight shelters, and transitional housing shelters within the rescue mission. Their main focus of the executive position was securing funding for the mission through donations, public funding, and social outreach subsidy.
**Programmer.** Programmer was a data manager for a large faith-based homeless rescue mission in a large metro area in the western US. They were relatively new to the position and had less than 5 years of experience working with homeless populations. They had also worked as an intake specialist at an overnight shelter in the same rescue mission network. The data that they worked with is mostly procedural, with a focus on providing accurate information about the people that use the resources in the rescue mission's network of shelters.

**Chef.** Chef was a service manager for a large faith-based homeless rescue mission in a large metro area in the western US. Chef oversaw the mission’s distribution center that stores and ships out resources such as food, clothing, and furniture to the network of shelters in the mission. Chef worked daily with people experiencing homelessness. The majority of the staff within the distribution center are clients of the rescue missions overnight and transitional shelters. The distribution center offers paid positions to people experiencing homelessness, and also accepts volunteers and community service from people not affiliated with the rescue mission. Chef has over a decade of working with homeless populations and previously worked as a minister for a local church that focused on homeless outreach.

**Findings from Data Collection Techniques**

The first method of data collection for the study was 20 in-depth interviews. All findings and convergent themes from this method are discussed in full further on in this chapter. The second method of data collection was comprised of reflexive data collected and analyzed throughout the research in the form of recording my experiences with this process. The final method of data collection was observational data recorded during my
participation in the National Point-In-Time Survey data collection for the year 2019. All sources of data were analyzed concurrently. Reflexive data was continually collected throughout the entire data analysis process.

**National Point-In-Time Survey: Observational Data**

On Monday, January 28th I participated in the National Point-In-Time homeless survey. I participated in a 2-hour training session the week before the survey date and spent 6 hours during the day of the survey working with a partner who was assigned to me. The federally directed survey is completed once a year by a social care network, in January throughout the United States for governing bodies, coalitions, and councils to use as an indicator of (1) the count of individuals and families that meet the definition of homelessness and (2) to capture information about the population like demographic characteristics and risk factors related to being homeless. The survey is conducted by region, either city, county, or state depending on size and resources, and uses volunteers to canvas designated areas of the region during one 24 hour point in time. The goal of the “point-in-time” survey is to have the best estimate of counts without duplicating counts in each region. For this specific region, there were 15 to 20 different regions in the city and surrounding areas with teams of 2 to 3 volunteers canvasing each area. Observational notes were collected during the training session and the survey day, along with artifacts and reflective data.

**Reflective Data Collection**

Reflective data was collected throughout the research study in the form of a personal journal and sound recorded notes on my personal cell phone. Reflective data
will be presented throughout the next two chapters as personal vignettes. All reflexivity data will be presented with a heading reflection from researcher.

**Data Representation**

The findings from all three data collection approaches have been overlaid throughout the chapter to include (a) convergent themes that emerged from the 20 in-depth interviews and their relationship to each research question, (b) the reflective themes that emerged from my own experiences conducting this study, and (c) analysis of observations from surveying hidden populations. All participants in the study are considered stakeholders in research with homeless populations.

The themes that emerged from the interviews are organized and presented based on the research questions that the themes related to and helped answer. Participants’ responses to the semi-structured questions were analyzed and grouped by similar responses. The major themes that emerged from the interviews are comprised of similar themes that were of help in examining and conceptualizing each participant’s response to the questions asked. Personal reflexivity and observations are added to each theme to give context to the research. A visual diagram example of the data representation can be found in Appendix F.

As stated in Chapter III, I used a critical lens while conducting this research and have overlaid this view to each research question and theme. The goal of this analysis is not to answer a definitive question, but to impose a critical attention to the issues of homeless research methodology and homeless personhood.

The research questions that guided this study were:

Q1 What methodological considerations do stakeholders in homeless research identify with hidden-population sampling methods?
Q2 What areas for ethical consideration do stakeholders of homeless research with hidden-populations identify with hard-to-reach sampling methods?

Q3 How does the exploration of the researcher’s history, position and reflexivity impact this research?

Methodological Considerations Stakeholders in Homeless Research Identify with Hidden-population Sampling Methods

Reflection from researcher:

There is a DISCONNECT between the idea of RESEARCHING and DEALING WITH the homeless population.

Answering this research question was not an easy task. The breadth of answering a research question that includes “methodological considerations” is akin to answering a question about the history of the United States and asking someone to “just tell me everything”. The methods involved in researching persons experiencing homelessness are one thing, but the consideration to the homeless persons and the impact the research will have on them before, during, and after the research is an entirely other story. I will present the data that I believe answers this question with the following in mind: “what do the stakeholders need to know?” What this means to me as the one answering this broad research question, and feeling fairly overwhelmed with the task, is that my feelings of tackling this question are also felt by the stakeholders in homeless research. All stakeholders spoke about feeling a sense of trepidation during the research process. The defining sentiment between the stakeholders was a lack of research support professionally, emotionally, and financially.

The last interview I conducted with a person experiencing homelessness was with LeLe. LeLe spoke about the struggles of being homeless and that for them, there was not a reason to even bother with researching the homeless:
I don’t even see the point… really. I know that someday I’ll have a chance to get help and work with some people that care, but if you ask me about research…

What am I going to do about research? You’re supposed to research like cancer and stuff like that. What are [you] going [to] do, make me better and not homeless with research? Are you going to make the cops around here care about me and not hassle me? Places like this [talking about the day shelter] are good, but that’s not anything, it’s just a place to do laundry. The cops and the mayor, that took away all the benches in town because they say that’s where homeless people sleep, so now you can’t even sit down anywhere downtown, what is research going to do about that? – LeLe (a person experiencing homelessness)

The first thing I noticed, after just one day of data collection, was that there was no shared existence between the homeless person, the social care provider, and the researcher. It’s obvious to say that every one of the stakeholders has their own unique life, but the outcome of the research, the shared experience of being a stakeholder, was completely different for everyone. Why does this matter? Because the outcome of the research is entirely dependent on the methodology. If the methodological process of the research has failed in some way or perhaps is underutilized, then the outcome will suffer.

Consider this encounter of Graduate, a researcher, trying to find people experiencing homelessness while participating in the National Point-In-Time Survey using a form of both Point-In-Time and Street Intercept methodology:

It was early in the morning and they had a lot of people go to certain areas around town. They sent me and someone else out to Walmart, this huge area to go search. So, we park and we walk around, but we didn't find a single person. Yeah, not one person. And we went into Walmart, and they said, there's people that hang out around the parking lot. They said there's this one guy that's always out there. But it's 7:30 in the morning and they said, it’s early—he’ll be here. They're saying that he's always there [but we don’t see him]. So we circle back around at the end of the day to see if he's there, and we couldn't find him. So, we walked back into Walmart…ask again if there’s any chance you've seen them and again, they say he's always there. It's crazy that he’s not here this one day, the one day were supposed to go and research this guy, who’s apparently always there, and we can’t find him. One time during the year to go research and count the homeless, and we didn’t find a single person…?! – Graduate (a researcher)
The use of Street Intercept methods like Graduate talked about can have practical problems that are created for the researcher when the sample is either hidden by choice or just simply by circumstance. During my own experience with Point-In-Time Survey methodology, I observed some of the same issues that Graduate did. The practicality of finding people to survey at one point in time, one morning during the year, was a struggle. Walking down a street, or through a park, or at a Walmart, and finding an exact type of person, whether they are homeless or not, is not easy, to say the least. Moreover, the chances of intercepting someone that the researcher perceives to be homeless is also a challenge. While it was simple to differentiate between homeless and non-homeless within a social care shelter, randomly asking someone you've never met before if they are homeless adds another challenge to researchers.

Reflection from researcher:

I can’t believe that I feel like a failure for not finding homeless people. What is wrong with me? I guess I’m not alone…. There was a weird sense of competition in the whole thing, like did you find anyone…? I found 3 homeless people!— feelings of jealousy and anger…so weird. This other person, this other volunteer, this other researcher somehow beat me at this? They win because they found more people who are suffering…?

Consider the rest of the story from Graduate and the experience of researching with a Street Intercept method of data collection:

And then the second year I did it, they gave me a different area. Kind of around the business highway, but kind of close to campus. We ran into one guy, but… it's one of those things when you approach somebody and you know… the script that [the social care network] gave us… it's not like you want to accuse somebody of being homeless, because to me, it's an accusation and I mean, it comes across as kind of derogatory. So that was the one where I approached them and kind of went along with the script that [the social care network] gave me and went with it. And he was like, No, I'm not homeless… you know, and that's one where you just don't ever really know. – Graduate (a researcher)
Graduate provides information about the complexity of personal judgment and professional research work. Graduate had to make some sort of verdict, a snap decision if this person was homeless or not. This is a singular case, in an area that is not particularly urban or relatable to major city areas that have much more visible homeless populations, but the concept is the same: personal housing status and personal perception do not exist in a vacuum. Perhaps the person Graduate approached that morning was experiencing homelessness and lied about it to stay hidden? Perhaps Graduate made a misjudgment about the person. There is no right answer, just the opportunity to critically evaluate this circumstance that has undoubtedly happened before and will undoubtedly happen again.

Reflection from researcher:

‘Hey! Check it out… I found one, let's go.’ We had all but given up on finding anyone to survey that day. Three hours walking through the woods, up and down the bike trail by the river, and nothing. We were on our way back to the United Way. But there he was—an old man, limping, disheveled, covered in years of dirt, so many layers of clothes on that I can't quite tell what kind of person is under there—but he's pushing a bike, with two flat tires, that has a makeshift shopping cart trailer hitched to the back. He's our guy. We did it. Let's pull over and…. I don't know. Should we park down the street…should we pull over right here…do we follow him…? I'm kind of a big guy, over 6 feet tall and big frame…this feels weird, really weird. Let's park a couple of blocks away, calmly walk down the street, and say hi. This still feels wrong like we're hunting this guy. Both those tires are flat. Let's go ask him if he needs a hand. Let's start there.

Songbird, a program director at a large social care network provider in a large urban city spoke about the people that they worked with daily and that there is no easy way to define the population, and moreover, the homeless and hidden population might not even define themselves that way:

We've had a lot of people at the cold weather shelter say, “I'm not homeless. I'm just here because I need a little bit of help”. So, some people are not eager to say that they are experiencing those hardships. When I explain homelessness, it means it's a whole spectrum, you know? You get so many different types of people that fit that position. People who have gone to college even, so yeah, it's
not just somebody who dropped out of school and decided not to work, there's a lot of hard-working people that are homeless. That's a virtue. I think that is at least a part of the hidden nature of [homelessness], which makes it hard to find and research, especially when someone is hiding the reality of it to others. To tell somebody else's reality, that’s not easy. – Songbird (a social care provider)

As I start to present the thematic findings from the research, keep in mind these perspectives from each of the stakeholders and how an important point is there is no “codebook” to homelessness. There is no linear flowchart of methodology to follow when challenges arise.

**Not a Singular Population:**

**Methodological Consideration**

I’m homeless because I want to be homeless. I’m a traveler. I’m just here for a little while – Slim Jim

I'm homeless again now because I had a falling out with my girlfriend and her landlord – Tree

I’ve been homeless for 15 years. I got problems no one can fix. – LeLe

I just ended up out in the park after I got kicked out of my parent's place the last time. Now I have a shopping cart for a home (laughing) – Shopping Cart

I didn’t want to put that on my daughter anymore, so I left. I’ve been in and out of transitional shelters since. That was about nine months ago. – Grandma

I just been living in the mountains since 2006. I’m not really homeless, like city homeless. I got my places in the woods nobody knows about but me. – Mountain Man

I don’t have to be homeless. I can get a place for free because of the baby, over at the church, but I don’t be away from him (Matt-Man, their partner). – Poison Ivy

We came here to get away from all the trouble back home in (Midwestern State). We had to leave. I needed the mental healthcare. I needed to be in the mountains in. – Matt-Man

I'm here because love fucked me up (laughs)... my girlfriend left... well, drugs are involved too. But it was the fact that she left and went to prison. And that leaves without, you know, her income and my income. There's all that shit and it only took two months for all that to happen, to get to the way I am right now (homeless). – Jeffro Gets
I hate this more than anything (crying)…. I’ve been on the housing list for like six years or more, and I mean it’s hard you know, I mean it really is. I hate this life. I hate living out of a bag. I mean I've had places to stay, but I haven't had a home in like… it's been almost nine years now, or eight years, and it sucks. – Texas

People are homeless for many different reasons. There can be similar reasons, but there should be a methodological assumption that every person experiencing homelessness are experiencing the phenomenon for different reasons. However, this creates a methodological “nightmare”. If a population in research is void of a sample frame to sample from, like hidden and homeless, how can you have a population that is not a population?

Knowing and defining your population, because there are multiple populations, multiple contexts, diversity, and intersectionality matters. Framing that [intersectionality], how you frame your study, your attention and the value orientation behind it. That's how it's going to affect your audience and your selection bias. Obviously, being self-aware of your motivations, in terms of what's your motivation, what's your history, we (the researchers) have privilege and advantage, and how that frames your research lens, and then how folks might interact with you matters, for any type of research, but especially for homeless research. – Wisconsin (a researcher)

Wisconsin had not only the experience of researching homeless populations, but also has a clinical counseling background. The methodological consideration of sampling and researching homeless populations is defined by the context of all parties involved. Again, I have used the term stakeholders in this research study, but the real term is people, and moreover, people with many differences. The ability to present oneself in the way that you want to be perceived is a basic personal facility, but the way you might be perceived is completely up to others, and out of your control. Why does this matter? Well, perhaps it doesn’t, but again, in the context of research methodology having the ability to define a sample is the first step of any research study.
It's really hard man. We try to stay hidden. Just walking around. There are people here, but we don't carry around all our stuff with us. We really try to look as less [sic] homeless as possible. Some days it's harder than others because you know, sometimes we do have to bring our stuff with us. – Matt-Man (a person experiencing homelessness)

There's tons of people that sleep in their cars, they [researchers] just don't know it. You'd really be surprised how many people are sleeping in their freakin’ cars, and they're the hidden people that we don't see. They are hidden. I mean, how many people are like me? Couch hopping, you know? I mean, like, last night, I had to sleep out in a tent, out in the woods. Nobody knew I was there. – Texas (a person experiencing homelessness)

The idea that there are sub-networks to hidden populations is not a groundbreaking or new finding. Like many groups, there are homogenous samples within larger heterogeneous populations. However, the homeless and hidden populations do not filter out their subgroups in ways that remove the overlying variable of homelessness. While other research settings like sports and exercise science, for example, might separate sample participants into subgroups based on skill level, position, or experience, social care networks for people experiencing homelessness do not have a subgrouping for people who sleep in a park verse those that might sleep in car.

I think that it's interesting that you have a population of homeless that wants to make themselves invisible [and those that want to stay visible]. These are the individuals that most people interact with when they see them panhandling at stop signs, like your heavy traffic areas, and so you definitely see a percentage of individuals who want to put themselves out there. Like you go down to our downtown building, at that facility, and you'll see individuals who are yelling at crowds and they're yelling at passersby… and there’s indifferent pedestrians, people who are walking by and there is obviously something to see, it in your face, but they don’t want to see it. But then there's a whole other group of individuals who really are hidden, they're the ones that are hiding under pathways. They're literally under bridges. They're there on trails, they're hiding out in the bluffs. They're hiding out in different areas. And so it really kind of comes down to how does this person get by? – Chef (a social care provider)

Chef describes the reality of working with homeless who are intentionally visible and deliberately hidden. Yet, they are all homeless, they fit the social phenomena of living on
the streets. What does a researcher do to engage the correct research methodology for the population that has so many differences, but one major similarity? Chef went on to say:

There’s a bunch of different sub-strata that I’ve come to learn [about the homeless]. Most of my papers [forms] have been with runaway homeless youth. So, really kids who are legally under 18, or like under the age of 24. So for youth, I think there is incredible substratum, so I usually term use the term runaway homeless youth because some youth are clearly runaways. There’s homeless, and there's homeless by choice. There's the traveler crowd who don't think that they're homeless at all. They’re choosing to live out and about. Then there’s the precariously housed, that’s where there’s kind of a crisis runaway homeless youth strata that really want to be in a shelter, and they don't want anything to do with being homeless. They all end up being in the same locations, the same [social care] agencies. So those are the locations where kids might be housed. They might be living in transitional housing, or they might be on the streets and living in the bushes by the creeks and they come there for the showers and the laundry and then the emergency shelters which are usually more short term in nature. And then they segue into transitional housing that's usually run by the social service agencies. – Chef (a social care provider)

Professor, a researcher who was a participant, describes the concept of working with one population, homeless youth, and the complexities of differentiating between the unique branches of the population. Notice that under the umbrella of homeless youth there are again intentionally visible, and deliberately hidden individuals. Yet, for the terms of Professor’s research, they are all the same relative age, are using the same facilities for basic needs like laundry and are all homeless. Professor does not expect the sample to be the same. There is an expectation, after years of researching the population, that there will be major differences in the people, in the interactions, and the analysis.

I just got a request to [write] a paper about couch surfing¹, so that's a whole other kind of subculture. But the kids are all the same whether they're coming from jail or if they're in foster care. If they're being trafficked, sadly, they kind of get dumped into that population as well. So, when we do our annual meeting for adolescent medicine, when [researchers] come together, they're all passionate

¹ Note: in the US couch surfing is considered a form of non-committal residence at houses, apartments or other domiciles.
about these very vulnerable kids, but they could all be working on something completely different, you know? And the kids go from system to system to system. What's the similarity that you see? There's kind of like the street kids, they kind of want to be out there, punk rock, you know, and then there's the almost forced out there, but what's similar? Where do you see the similarities? I see about, just guessing, 80 to 90% of kids have had significant trauma in their life. They've been messed up either as little kids or recently. They've mostly come from families living in poverty in some manner. I just had a conversation like this with a researcher in Minneapolis, and it was about how some of them are still very connected to their parents but is it by choice or by force? Can they not live with their families for some reason? That's why they find themselves independently living alone. Many of them in my research have had child protection services experience in the past, and most of them have some sort of mental health diagnosis. – Professor (a researcher)

Professor elaborates on the complexities of sampling a population that has substrata within the unique sub-population of the larger population. When considering sampling techniques as a research method, the consideration of this phenomenon within the phenomenon is critical to sound research.

There's people I know that they're not even homeless, you know? They got places to stay, they got Social Security checks coming in once a month and I know they got a room somewhere. They just use it up too quickly and then you see them again at the end of the month. They show up for a week or a couple of days and want to be seen as homeless and I need help and all that, but they're just waiting for the next check then they're gone. – Shopping Cart (a person experiencing homelessness)

Reflection from researcher:

I hated panhandling. I hated it so much. I know that I’ll sit here all day and, yeah, I’m kind of having fun with these kids, I mean, it’s San Francisco, this is insane! But I’m not like them, they’re not like me. We’re going to make some money today, but what am I going get? I’m still going to be eating leftovers out of the trash can. They’re buying dope. All our money and it’s gone. Why am I even here? I’m not fucked up like these guys…am I? I’m here…. I’m stuck here, but I’m here. I’m just the same.

Songbird helps differentiate between the pathways someone might have into being homeless and how that might relate to the way they would be categorized as a person experiencing homelessness.
Homelessness isn't defined by one thing, because people fall into homelessness through many avenues and you can't just put everybody in a box. So you might see people who may be panhandling on the side of the street, but that's the exception. I would say there are lots of different kinds of people [experiencing homelessness]. We have a cold-weather shelter here. There's a lot of people who have jobs that use the shelter. So they wake up early in the morning, five in the morning, go to their job, and then they come back to the shelter at night because they don't have a place that they can afford to live in. So, when talking about people experience homelessness, in my job, I like to tell people that you can't stereotype. – Songbird (a social care provider)

Throughout this research many terms were used to categorize the population:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Homeless</th>
<th>Street Kids</th>
<th>Homeless Youth</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Runaways</td>
<td>Runaway Homeless Youth</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Vagrant</td>
<td>Couch Surfer</td>
<td>Camper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Free</td>
<td>Invisible</td>
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I have condensed these terms in Table 4.1, to four different groups that help categorize the language. These are not mutually exclusive groups and do not work as a firm classification for any one individual, or one group. However, they do provide context to the situation to help forward the methodological framework for the research, and for researchers looking to work with homeless populations.

Table 4.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Categorization of Persons Experiencing Homelessness</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Methodological Grouping for Homeless Sampling</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Hidden</td>
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**Hidden.** Hidden does not mean invisible. Invisible is a term used by many in the culture of homelessness, particularly by social care providers, but hidden is an aspect of personal choice by the person. Hidden should be thought of as a personal preference of the individual, or group of those experiencing homelessness and what they want to show
to the world. This does not mean you, as the researcher, are the ones that they want to hide from. More often than not, your role as a researcher is irrelevant to their personal decision to be seen or stay hidden. Researchers must take into consideration that there is a fear of law enforcement for the person experience homelessness, and there should be an expectation of trepidation from the person experiencing homelessness towards a researcher until there has been some level of relationship and trust built. Social care networks, like shelters, can be considered as a channel for building trust and forming relationships.

**Homeless.** The person experiencing homelessness who is without shelter, outside the boundaries of walls, roofing, and flooring can be considered homeless. The definition of homeless from the sample of individuals studied in this research project was not used ubiquitously. Homeless was used as a term that was used ubiquitously throughout the study by all stakeholders, but held a context of explanation beyond other terms. There is a need to use the right language when discussing the population, but understanding that the definition of homeless can go beyond shelter is the most important aspect of using this term. For researchers, it is highly important to understand that social care is ubiquitous for those defined as homeless regardless of the level of shelter. The social care providers most likely know this or have a regulation built into the care network that sets boundaries for this. However, for researchers, the expectation that the sample will be dissimilar is vital to understanding the sample.

**Precariously sheltered.** Having shelter intermittently one night, one week, or one month equals precariously sheltered. This does not redefine the person experiencing homelessness as non-homeless or housed. While everyone will ultimately have their
definition of their own lived experience, through this research I found that as the whole, the culture still considers them homeless while being precariously sheltered. This is important for multiple reasons. For providers, the social care networks are still needed and used by people who are precariously sheltered, and the challenges that arise from being homeless are still present for those that are precariously sheltered. For the person experiencing homelessness, the cultural difference between the housed and the homeless does not change because there is irregular shelter. For the researcher, they must try to keep their cultural awareness consistent for each person experiencing homelessness to remain an equitable researcher. People experiencing homelessness do not carry a sign that relates their level of current or recent past shelter, and thus the researcher must remain critical of their own reflection as to the judgments that they need to carry into each situation. However, understanding that someone who is precariously sheltered is uses social care networks to a moderate level of regularity is a simple way to help understand that person. There is a difference between someone who stays hidden from society, whether it be because of mental health issues, substance issues, or something else, and someone who is actively seeking at least a moderate level of social services to start or remain sheltered.

**Precariously housed.** The precariously housed person is best defined by their role as someone who is between regular housing and homelessness, without the defining role of being hidden or precariously sheltered. The precariously housed are generally the ones that are using the most of the short-term social care networks. The person experiencing homelessness might not always consider themselves to be homeless if they are precariously housed but can have the same social and cultural needs as other persons
experiencing homelessness. The researcher should be aware that the precariously housed might have different needs and definitions for their lived experience and might consider the social care networks differently than the hidden or the precariously sheltered. Social care providers are aware of the difference because the precariously housed person has a different set of social care needs than others who are homeless.

Homeless Culture Defined by Setting:
Methodological Consideration

Reflection from researcher:

I didn’t want to leave that day. It’s kind of funny when I reflect on that first encounter with Texas… that was such a strange encounter. Not strange because of Texas, not because of what they shared with me or that they had a moment, but because I didn’t know anything about this place yet. I didn’t know there was an ebb-and-flow between those working at the shelter and those using the shelter. At this point I was somewhat well-known in this place, I mean, I had been there 3 times in the last 2 weeks and I had 20 bucks for interviews. There were resources to be had in here, but it wasn’t usually 20 dollars cash for talking with some researcher. Oddly, I was never approached for an interview by someone homeless, which is a little weird, but I was definitely looked at. Not in a bad way, but in a high-status kind of way, I guess? I don’t usually feel like that. But at the same time, there was a comfortability with the level of status, mine, and everyone else’s. I don’t know if there’s an example I can think of, but it was like there was a hierarchy of person in there, but everyone shared the space in the same way…? It’s like… when you’re in the shelter, either as a person experience homelessness or a social care provider for the homeless, everything about you is out in the open. There’s nowhere to hide. There’s no secrets, there’s no pretending anymore. You’re here, either to help or get help, and whatever you got, whether you need help or want to help… well… what you got? What are going to do? Let’ see it. There’s no time for your and anyone else’s bullshit. This is real now. But somehow, I wasn’t asked by anyone if they could do an interview. They all followed the lead of Leader, and so did I… that’s just the way it was.

The defining characteristic of all interviews conducted during this study was the discussion of culture, and how culture affects the assessment of the population.

Definitions of people (all stakeholders) were overlaid with context about culture. The context of the culture was decorated with stories about people, places, and interactions
and how the culture of the situation was the defining characteristic of that encounter.

There are critical similarities between all types of stakeholders in this research. Social care providers recognize that the culture is heavily impacted by the person experiencing homelessness. Persons experiencing homelessness recognize that their culture is created in part by the social care networks available. Researchers must recognize that the culture differs according to the people and the places that they encounter their sample.

Leader was the first social care provider I interviewed, and they were also the first person I talked to about the culture of the people they had worked with for over 20 years. We had a long discussion about the hidden side of the homeless culture, and that for Leader, the hidden aspect of the culture was about what the people keep hidden emotionally, and what they could not hide from the world because their lives were so visible to the public due to their lack of housing.

There's a lot of shame and guilt that goes along with being homeless, our clients get to know us, and they can kind of let down their guard a little bit. But people that have no money, no home, there's an incredible amount of shame that goes with that, because society expects them to contribute. And if they can't contribute, because they're either mentally ill or addicted, or just have no money because they can't work or can't find work, there's just so much shame. So there's multiple reasons, but there are so much shame and guilt that goes with it. I've heard some of our people talk about having an open container, you know, alcohol or smoking pot or whatever in public. It's not like that's not an issue with housed people, it's more of them having somewhere to do it. It's just that it's not in the open [for housed people]. In the community, they have to be hidden or invisible because of the law, mostly because everywhere they go, they're not supposed to be there. Even if it's okay (legal) to be there! They're not wanted there. So that's a constant thing that they deal with. And that's what sets us apart from the rest of the community, is that we want them here – Leader (social care provider)

Leader talked about, that in their experience, the culture of the social care network as open, welcoming, and engaging. There are rules, like anywhere else, but there is an open-door policy and a culture of care. However, outside the walls of the shelter, the
culture changes. The hidden and homeless individuals have a different experience outside of the social care network that Leader helps provide. There is a culture of being unwanted and unforgiven in the public for the hidden and homeless. Public settings become an area where the culture for the person experiencing homelessness changes. There are critical differences between the cultures of the person experiencing homelessness in a public setting than that of a social care network.

Matt-Man and his wife Poison Ivy are not strangers to the social care culture, and in particular, they had been coming to the shelter that Leader managed for months. Matt-Man talked earlier about taking precautions to not look homeless with the clothes they were wearing or the stuff they were caring with them. Matt-Man elaborated about why, and how the public setting can change the way they feel and act.

I just try not to be seen man, because honestly the more people that know where you are, the bigger the risk. The cops, they find your spot and they'll confiscate everything and then you have nothing. No sleeping bag, nothing, and you're working from the bottom again. It's pretty scary. So the less visible you are, the better. You really don't want anybody seeing you. [Recently] we came out of our camp and two people were walking down the trail nearby, and we completely ducked down and waited for them to pass, because we don't want anybody knowing that we're there. It's not that we're trying to get away with something illegal. We're just trying to have a spot where we can continue to work towards the goals that we have, and whenever you're packing up every day and you're moving, that's your whole day. – Matt-Man (a person experiencing homelessness)

Matt-Man’s discussion of the need to stay hidden, to not look like or to be seen as homeless in the public is vital to the researcher when sampling homeless populations. Because of the setting, due to the location and the nature of the moments, Matt-Man and Poison Ivy might be completely open to discussion and sharing their lived experience (e.g. my interview within the day shelter) or they might be actively avoiding contact with any other person that comes within their vicinity.
For Matt-Man and Poison Ivy staying hidden in the public setting is an issue of personal care, but some persons experiencing homelessness it is an issue of substance or emotional prompts. Songbird describes an individual staying hidden from their cold-weather shelter to stay away from substance abuse triggers.

So, there's kind of a spectrum for this [staying hidden]. You have people who are very individualistic and they don't want anything to do with other people experiencing homelessness, because there could be a lot of drugs and so people try to stay away from that, or a lot of alcohol use, any substance really. I know one guy specifically, he just got out of jail and he said he'd been sober for a while and he didn't want to go back to using so he chooses sometimes to not stay at the shelter and stay outdoors because he doesn't want to be around that. – Songbird (a social care provider)

While the cold weather shelter that Songbird is referring is considered a "wet" shelter, meaning that there is no expulsion of people for being intoxicated at the shelter, the cultural environment is worrisome enough for the person experiencing homelessness to avoid shelter during the winter just to stay hidden from the culture that might have triggers of substance use. Songbird elaborated on this with an example of emotional ties to other persons within the culture, changing the way an individual and group within the population might be located.

Another spectrum you have is that people really take care of each other. They’re really closely knit, they know each other by name, they know each other’s stories. I had one gentleman come in and tell me “hey, I'm going to get two plates because there's a girl outside who has a dog and you don't take dogs”. We don't allow dogs to stay at the shelter and she didn't want to leave her dog. So he was going to go sleep with her outside somewhere in a park so he can take care of her because he’s afraid that something will happen to her. – Songbird (a social care provider)

Researchers cannot expect to have the same interactions at a shelter for each kind of person. Consider the story of the person collecting two plates of food that Songbird talked about. For researchers, this person's culture might be drastically different inside and outside of the shelter, changing with the setting they are in. Certainly, they were
willing and open to talk about their situation with the dog and staying outside to Songbird inside the shelter, but would they be as willing in the public? Would this person use means to stay hidden or concealed from the public to stay safe, or keep the girl with the dog safe?

Reflection from researcher:

I saw Matt-Man and Poison Ivy and it was like seeing old friends. They were so comfortable with me. No awkwardness at all, just closeness. So strange, not because of them, but because I only interviewed them once, for an hour, last week, but this was normal now…? I walked out of there and over to my car, I parked 3 blocks away for some reason… but I knew that my chances of seeing either of them again was next to nothing, but I didn’t feel bad about it. I felt comfortable. It was a strange, but easy feeling. Was I part of this now? Is this my culture…?

I asked Mountain Man about their means to stay hidden or concealed from the public. They talked about the role that society has for someone who chooses to live outside of the city, and how they were different.

I'll be gone for months, especially in the summer. If I can manage it, I'll take off into the woods and I'll be gone for days or even weeks. There's no one to bother you up there, you know what I mean? There's no one there but me. It gets cold in the winter, so I'll come down here to city, to [the day shelter] to get some coffee and say hi to everyone, but I don't have to, you know? There are people here, they have to come here every day because they can't manage it out alone. - Mountain Man (a person experiencing homelessness)

Again, the setting of the research, the natural and biopsychosocial factors surrounding the sample matters at the individual and population level. For Mountain Man, there is a cultural norm in the “woods” and a cultural norm in the “city”. Jeffro Gets also explained the difference in the perceptions of homelessness and how the time of day and location could change everything.

I don't like to look homeless. I don't like to let everybody know, but I'll fly a sign [sparing for change] at the same time if I need to. I don’t like to carry all my stuff with me though. I like to put it in a locker here [at the day shelter] and have it
safe. I have a locker here I have one in [the next town over] as well. Because, if you sleep outside at night you have to say hidden, you don't have a choice. They [the cops] don’t let you sleep at night, like it’s against the law to sleep at night. But during the day you can sleep, sort of. You can put a tent down in the park, as long as you don't stake it down, during the day from the hours 6:30[am] and 8 o'clock, so what wrong with doing it a night? You can't have all that stuff with you. I don't personally want to stay hidden or be hidden, but I have to. – Jeffro Gets (a person experiencing homelessness)

Understanding the location of the individual and where the research will take place is critical to the researcher and the persons experiencing homelessness. The critical understanding of the culture for the researcher is embedded in the setting of the person, the setting, and the person's lived experience within that setting. Researchers have the burden of being culturally responsive in the research settings they put themselves in, and understanding that the hidden and homeless culture is receptive to the setting is vital for culturally responsive research with hidden and homeless populations.

Research Culture Defined by Regulation:
Methodological Consideration

Reflection from researcher:

I remember being homeless in San Francisco, being a 'street kid' to be honest, but it was still the part. From the first idea of researching homeless populations 8 years, ago to now, working on this dissertation, it's all been because of that experience. It just stays with you. So many memories and flashbacks to that time. Anyway, it was easy for me. The rules were pretty simple. Stay to the side, don't cause too much trouble, and stay hidden at night in the park. No problem. I didn't have any real emotional or substance abuse issues, I was just young and happily naive. It was actually pretty good living for a kid on the streets! But it wasn't like that anywhere else.

Throughout this research, across all stakeholders, there was a critical similarity in the data about the connection between the accessibility to the population and the legal or procedural regulation in that area. For researchers, the focus is the known sampling frame in the area of interest for the research study. For social care providers, the sampling frame
is the known population of interest that need or might seek out social care. For the person experiencing homelessness, this is about being an individual without the boundary of the hidden, homeless, precariously sheltered, or precariously housed label.

This is the only place I feel safe, like I’m not going to get shit just for sitting here. I’m not doing a thing! I can’t sit here at the store? I got to go to [the local park] and be in the middle of a bunch shit. They got coffee here [at the shelter], they’re always nice to me, they don’t give me trouble here. Not like the cops, it’s always something with them. They know me and they don’t like me. – LeLe (a person experiencing homelessness)

During the conversations with people experiencing homelessness there was a forthright and unashamed thankfulness for the areas that they received social care from. Consider the comments below and how the interaction with social care networks aids in the comfort of the person experiencing homelessness.

Food banks are the best! You show up to a food bank with a dog, especially a super friendly dog like Lucky, and you’re walking out of there with some resources! Luck does it—that’s why he’s Lucky! – Slim Jim (a person experiencing homelessness)

I don’t go anywhere but here [the day shelter]. You wouldn’t even know I existed if it wasn’t for this place (laughing). – Mountain Man (a person experiencing homelessness)

Some places don’t like me showing up. That place [points to a transitional shelter across the street] they don’t let me in there anymore. They don’t even like me in the parking lot, but I still go over there sometimes (smiles). But this place [the overnight shelter] is fine, they are nice. I really don’t stay here much—I haven’t for a while, but I can come here and they don’t mind. I can just do what I need to do here. – Shopping Cart (a person experiencing homelessness)

It’s not easy living here, or trying to like, stay in touch with kids or grandkids and what they are doing. Not having a car is probably the hardest with that. I was at a transitional house for like three months; that was a life saver. This place [the overnight shelter], it's not the worst, but it's not great. – Grandma (a person experiencing homelessness)

Poison Ivy, along with Matt-Man talked about their active measures to stay hidden, but Poison Ivy spoke more about what it meant to use social care networks, and
how the ability to find comfort and resources within a network where they do not have to
stay hidden helped them find more resource for the upcoming birth of their child.

We have a woman here [at the day shelter] that volunteers on Thursdays, and she
knows that we don't have a place yet and that we probably won't have a place very
soon. It's really hard to get a place. We're in programs, but haven’t found
anywhere to live yet! But she told me that when we have the baby, or when it gets
close to time, [me and the baby] can come live with her. She's had other homeless
people live with her. We don't want to lose the baby, so we might have to. –
Poison Ivy (a person experiencing homelessness)

Reflection from researcher:

San Francisco was OK, but I wanted to go to Berkeley so bad! That's where all
the ‘real’ people were from. All the good bands, the revolutionaries, People's Park
was there, that was all in Berkley. So I went over there. It wasn't the same. I
wasn't welcome. We weren't welcome. San Francisco had the Golden Gate Park,
there's room to move in there, room to hide. Berkeley had People's Park… the
famous ‘People's Park’… ok, great, but you could throw a rock across this thing!
This isn't a park, it's a back yard! Not only is there no room to move, no room to
hide, but there's also sign after sign that says ‘no sleeping, no blankets, no tents,
park closes at sundown’…!!!

The connection about the social care networks was common, but some spoke
about the connection between regulations involving illegal camping or trespassing and
how that regulation would contribute to active measures to stay hidden. Texas talked
about their recent eviction from a camp at a local pond.

You try to find the darkest, most inconspicuous spots you can find, you know
what I mean? Where nobody goes to. If you have a camp, you make sure there’s
only one path that you can access it. My last camp was really well hidden, but
someone was out fishing on the pond and saw us, but the only reason [the
fisherman] saw us was the reflection of my bike off the lake! Other than that, you
couldn’t’ see where we were at. But [the fisherman] called it in. Really? It's like,
Are you that nosey? I mean, we weren't bothering anybody and usually we were
up by early, but not that morning. It was kind of a cold, kind of dreary looking
morning, so we slept in for some reason, and [the fisherman saw my bike]. So,
they came and shut down our camp, cause of nosey fisherman. – Texas (a person
experiencing homelessness)
The culture is not only defined by environmental or regulatory issues, but also by the way that the research approaches the culture. This idea goes hand-in-hand with the social care providers. Consider the thoughts of Songbird when talking about the homeless population they work with and the way that the rules and regulations might have an effect on the person experiencing homelessness.

So I think one of the biggest things to let people know is that if somebody doesn't have a safe space to be in, like their own place to live, it's harder for them to work on things that they need to work on—mental health problems, substance abuse, maybe financial problems that they may have. Imagine trying to work on your substance abuse when you don't have somewhere safe to go at night to sleep, that's stressful. It’s anxiety-provoking as well, especially if it's your first time being homeless. – Songbird (a social care provider)

Songbird adds context to the idea that the daily life of the person experiencing homelessness has many aspects, many of which involve issues of substance or mental abuse and trauma. Songbird provides insight into the phenomenon of homelessness with further accounts of their experience working with the population.

I think knowing that you have to meet people where they're at is important. Like I was saying with the alcohol abuse, you don’t want to jump from one extreme to another. You've been drinking for 20 years of your life but now you're [going to stop completely] because this is sober living with a zero-tolerance policy? That’s unreasonable. The policy matters [and some] policies are kind of tough to swallow for people, especially when they've been living with their own rules for so long. I think meeting people where they're at [is important]. And then setting expectations, of course, because rules are necessary so people are safe, but setting reasonable expectations, I think is a better way to say it. – Songbird (a social care provider)

It is important for researchers to know their role in the environment that the research is conducted, and how the culture surrounding the individual or the group under study is affected by the culture.
Reflection from researcher:

I never felt so unsafe in my life. The funny thing is, I’m not sure what I was scared of…? Was it the Cops? Maybe, they definitely woke us up this morning with a gun right in my face. That was not a good feeling. I can’t blame them, what do they know? How are they supposed to know People’s Park was supposed to be my next home-away-from-home? It was supposed to be easy. But now I’m so scared that I don’t know where to go. Literally, this place is so cramped, so congested. Where can I hide? I don’t want to jump another fence and get busted again. It’s back to San Francisco. There’s less trouble there. There’s food banks there. There’s the youth outreach there. That’s where I’ll be. This kind of place will turn you into something else, something I don’t want be.

Leader spoke more than once about the way the general public perceived the people they worked with and the way they were perceived at the shelter.

I like to use the term invisible, I mean, obviously, these people are here, right? If you drive down the street, they’re are [standing] there. They might be standing right in front of the building here, you know, but they're hidden and invisible to everyone, but not here [at the shelter]. But in the community, they're hidden because of the law, mostly because everywhere they go, they're not supposed to be there. Even if it's okay [legally] to be there, they're not wanted there. So that's a constant thing that they deal with. And that's what sets us apart from the rest of the community is that we want them here. – Leader (a social care provider)

The fact that shelters actively works to seek out and provide resources to people experiencing homelessness should not be understated. Of course, there would be a higher propensity to accept people experiencing homelessness within a homeless outreach center. However, understanding that connection, as a methodologist, that the individual who is otherwise seen as hidden or invisible in other areas with different regulations, but is seen as visible in one area without the regulation is a vital starting point for sample and population sampling techniques. It might seem like an obvious conclusion, but it is critical for researchers seeking to sample hidden and homeless populations at the point within the sampling frame that has the least amount of regulatory oversite for those people experiencing homelessness. Through this research I found those places to be day
shelter, overnight shelter, transitional housing shelters, food banks, rescue missions, and homeless coalitions.

**Sampling Bias is Real and That's Okay:**

**Methodological Consideration**

Reflection from researcher:

There is no random sample in hidden population research. There is no random sample in homeless research. And that's okay.

There are methods to statistically account for the lack of random sampling within homeless and hidden population research, but the sampling itself is always defined by some type of sampling bias, as it has to be without a known sampling frame to randomly choose from. Someone, somehow, no matter what, will have a higher probability of being selected than someone else. Yet, the sampling is still needed, it has to be, there would be no research without sampling. And that's okay.

There are considerations to the regulation and the culture that all impact the way the sample is collected. This is not a corrupt mechanism of the research, this is simply an artifact of the population in consideration. And that’s okay.

Reflection from researcher:

Leader knew whom they wanted me to talk to. Wait, I don't chose whom I talk to? It's not random? It’s not sound scientific research practice, but what am I going to do? I have to follow the rules like anyone else, and in here, it’s Leader’s rules. It’s a gatekeeper opening the gate that they want to open, and I need that gate. I need to do this the way that will work.

The data from the researchers all had the same critical similarity: they all spoke about the need to know your population before you start sampling. This is ultimately a break in the randomness of collecting a sample. If you know your sample, if you know who you might or might not have access to, then you must have some sort of bias in that
sampling technique. Yet, the relationship, the rapport building with stakeholders in the research is critical to conducting research with a population that is hidden or hard-to-reach.

Professor talks about the research process from the start of the engagement with the community, to the day-to-day progression of the research at a local homeless shelter.

Its community based participatory research, [with] tenants of community-engaged research. [It's me asking the site] "Would this be helpful?" Part of my grants have paid for staff to help with the data collection and the training, bringing together sources like the research assistants, and the trainers to the site to make it easy for them to also get something out of it. [Then over time] the research assistants would be present there, [people experiencing homelessness] would see us and they would know who we are. They felt comfortable approaching people and saying, “Hey, do you mind filling out this survey?” You know, it’s a 10 minutes survey during breakfast at the shelter, and [people] usually fill it out. – Professor (a researcher)

Applying a critical lens to what Professor talks about, and using the groundwork of sampling methodology, the critical importance is the action of the research. The fact that the research can happen through the process of community-based participatory research allows for the examination of the data and provides amplification of voice for the population using the shelter. Without the action of the research, these voices would be unheard.

Reflection from researcher:

The critical lens cannot analyze research if the research is not actualized.

The engagement from all sources of stakeholders is what is important to focus on, not on the lack of sound survey methodology. Yes, there is sampling bias. The shelter has to have some advantage to having the research conducted on-site. This is sampling bias. The community has some advantage in having the research conducted locally in their area. This is sampling bias. The researcher has the advantage of publication and
advancement from the research being conducted in their name. This is sampling bias. The person experiencing homelessness has the advantage of compensation above and beyond that of others in the same position. This is sampling bias. Yet, the research is conducted and there is marketable information gained from the research. Generalizations are made, or not made, by the consumers of the research regardless if the sampling methodology used was completely random.

Reflection from researcher:

Leader said ‘I got someone you can really help out. They need this. Let me go find them’ Ok, that's great, I'll sit here in this weird office and wait for the people that need this. Is this wrong? There are what, 30 people in here today? They all need this. What the hell am I doing just letting her decide who I'm going to talk to? Calm down, I tell myself, this isn't that big of a deal. What were you going to do, play pick-a-straw with everyone here today? I mean, there is 20 bucks involved. That's not bad for a half-hour of work. Ok, here they come… ‘Hey, here they are, this Mat-Man and Poison Ivy and they’re expecting their baby girl in about 3 weeks’.

Graduate spoke about the sampling bias in their research, and that they were very much aware of it. Graduate continued their discussion about the Point-In-Time survey, as well adding the context of using formal locations like shelters to find participants to sample.

We have all these services that homeless individuals may or may not use, and that's really straightforward. But informally, I don't think it's as straightforward. How do you recruit people if you're not going to go through these formal channels? As a friend of mine once said, if you go through these formal channels, you're going to get a biased opinion. And then, [if your sample size is really small], that bias I think, is going to really shine. [You can help mitigate that] if you develop a relationship with somebody, really get to know them, but you have to have the time to build that relationship. – Graduate (a researcher)

The challenge for Graduate, as well as my work with the same type street intercept sampling, is that you ultimately do not know if your personal instincts, personal judgments, about someone are correct. Starting your sampling at a point where persons
experiencing homelessness gather is sampling bias. Yet, the critical aspect of that location is that it might be the only place that you know you have the sample that you are looking for.

I don't want to offend anybody, and I don't want to put anybody in a box just because of the way they look. Because I can fit that box sometimes! And so it's kind of hard for me to generalize people, because, to me, everybody's a person, everybody has a story. And while I want to hear your story, I also don't want to offend you by trying to recruit you. So, the Point-In-Time count, the approaching aspect of it… how do you approach individuals that might be or appear to be homeless, without going through the formal network? I don’t know [if I have an answer], but it wasn’t easy. So going through a Catholic [social care network], and trying to do it more informally, that works, but it's tricky. It can be biased. – Graduate (a researcher)

Reflection from researcher:

Wisconsin talked about the need to build rapport with the shelters as a volunteer and through a continued presence in the shelter. If this type of relationship building is necessary to find the sample, then there is undoubtedly bias built into the sampling technique simply because there is only so much time one can volunteer.

I used my prior background of volunteering at the [overnight shelter] as a means of establishing some credibility. I worked to navigate and build relationships with members at the shelter, administratively and at the general staff level. So I think that created a bridge for me to be able to better access participants. It gave me credibility with folks that are homeless, showing care for the community. I work to have that “top-down” administrative support before entering as a researcher. I think I did 4 different studies during my time there [at that shelter]. I did some solicitations at the larger staff meetings and community meetings. [I gave] some sort of research base presentation to give information about myself, like here's my background and value orientation, and where I was coming from, the “why”, the
purpose of the research. I think that definitely might have helped establish some trust and credibility, openness to approaching me. – Wisconsin (a researcher)

Time and resources become the issue. Access to shelters becomes an issue. Yet, there is still access, and somehow researchers like Professor, Graduate, and Wisconsin all found the time and resources to make their respective research happen. Wisconsin elaborated on their experience, and how the sampling bias, or selection bias, was a necessary part of the research.

And thinking about the research now, there's somewhat of a selection bias [because] not everyone opted to participate. I don't know what was going on with those who didn't want to participate, how they responded to [the research]. Most people seemed to engage pretty positively, yet there were certainly some folks who didn't. Especially when I did a more quantitative study, a regression-based study, as compared to a qualitative interview. There were times where folks just weren't able to engage based on the levels of functioning. During my dissertation, I had a few folks that based on prior trauma, just were unable to follow through, which is totally fine…understandable. – Wisconsin (a researcher)

Populations like the homeless can have special needs and characteristics to manage. What is important for this research, applying a critical lens to the methodology of researching hidden and homeless populations is that the critical researcher should expect there to be challenges, should expect there to be special needs, and that these expectations should be the norm.

Challenges are a part of it. I tried to occasionally, especially for my dissertation, to step away from my volunteer role in order to compartmentalize my role there. That was a challenge, as far as trying to be a little bit more compartmentalized, ethical, and have boundaries. As far as the researcher's bias… it’s challenging, selection bias can be challenging. With the particular research questions I asked, using a critical lens, I think that somewhat mitigated that [selection bias] for me. Depending on what your research questions are, what your approach is, that can be a significant factor. My positionality, based on my identity markers and levels of privilege, that can certainly be a factor in terms of the interactions with folks and how much they might be willing to disclose or how they might respond to me. – Wisconsin (a researcher)
The critical similarity between Wisconsin, Professor, and Graduate is that they all were able to theorize, locate, and sample from a population of persons experiencing homelessness. The critical similarity is that they all had some source of rapport created to help find at least part of their sample. The critical similarity is that there were challenges. The critical similarity is that they researched a population that is hard-to-reach and can have multiple aspects of hiddenness.

What Areas, for Ethical Considerations, do Stakeholders in Homeless Research with Hidden-populations Identify with Hard-to-reach Sampling Methods?

Three methodological challenges that stakeholders must endure when working with the homeless population are a) correct sampling techniques b) conducting ethical research, and c) understanding that the homeless population is multi-faceted. Stakeholders in this study have discussed some of the dynamics that they observed in the homeless populations they researched. They also discussed with me such things as the different cultures, varied settings, legal regulations, and sampling bias that is inherent when researching people experiencing homelessness. Many of these reasons, like the differences in culture and regulation, are also, at their core, ethical considerations as well. Consider again LeLe's personal account of their experience being homeless:

I’ve been homeless for 15 years. I got problems no one can fix. - LeLe

There are many facets to explore in this one sentence about LeLe and their lived experience. While researchers might have the professional expertise to manage this situation, I do not have a background, either educationally or professionally that can adequately and ethically handle such a statement. For example, this research study was specifically about the methodological considerations of researching hidden and homeless
populations, not providing emotional or social care for hidden and homeless populations. However, I do have an educational and professional background in research methodology and can understand that something was missing for all stakeholders in homeless research when the researcher was under qualified to handle each situation. Furthermore, the critical lens applied in this research should challenge what faults the researcher has in their ability to perform ethical research for the participant, and for the researcher themselves. There were ethically critical considerations, which needed to be considered and examined from a methodological perspective. Throughout my work on this study, throughout each interview, across each type of stakeholder, something was absolutely certain: when working with homeless populations you have to be more than just a researcher.

Reflection from researcher:

When I first started talking with LeLe I didn’t know what to expect. When I approached them, they were hesitant, but engaging. LeLe was aware there was compensation for the interview, I know because they just saw me interviewing someone else and handing them a 20 dollar bill. I asked them, like I asked everyone: will you tell me your story? What a loaded question! I didn't expect this question, the first question I asked every single person experiencing homelessness to be such a dam breaker, such a flood starter! Not one person I talked to hesitated. They all opened up, they all told me their story—their experience. But LeLe went straight to the ‘bad stuff’… that's not right, that’s my judgment, that it's bad to have personal difficulties—to deal with something as challenging as mental illness…. I just put that on LeLe. I just made that marker. I just checked that box. This is their box to check, but I don't know when it's my part to intervene…I don't know…. What did I do when Texas started crying…?

Methodological Considerations of Being a Researcher: The Least Important Role in Homeless Research

Grounded in the data from this study, from all stakeholders, and from my reflections, was the discovery that playing the role of the researcher when researching
homeless populations involves so much more than just being the researcher. Procedural ethical considerations from regulatory agencies like the Institutional Review Board are still adhered to and are not challenged by these findings, but relational ethics (Ellis, 2007; Roche, et al. in Lahman, 2017) move the researcher of the homeless beyond minimal ethical guidelines. The importance of understanding and taking precautions for the potential and real vulnerabilities while researching the homeless population was still present and should remain focused on protecting the welfare, rights, and privacy of the research participants. The homeless population has an increased level of vulnerability and research regulatory bodies should continue to provide an increased level of protection for the population. The methodological considerations from this study centered on the role of the researcher and the interactions they might potentially have with the population as a researcher. This was not a one-sided focus, this was where these data took the analysis. Through a critical lens one might look at this as focusing only on the researcher as the lone stakeholder in the equation, yet, the data points to the critical understanding that the researcher must be prepared for working with a population that will most likely challenge their professional skills, personal skills, and coping skills. Researching the homeless population goes beyond the training received from regulatory agencies. A researcher who has been well-trained at managing their subjective exchanges would be far better equipped to interview homeless participants. They would have better ethical interactions and receive enriched quality data.

One of my first interviews in this study was with Songbird who took the first minute of our time to talk about the importance of language and the way that the
researcher, or any social care provider, can put themselves in a better position to understand the person by using person-first language.

So first off, we try to refer to everyone as “people experiencing homelessness” or “on the verge of homelessness”. You have a spectrum of people from the chronically homeless, like people who have been experiencing homelessness for over 15 years, and then you have people who are experiencing housing instability, like people that are couch-surfing or families that are doubled-up in units. There's just so many differences between everyone that you can't just put them in one box. So starting with the language and letting the person know that you are not this thing called "homeless", that you are a person who is experiencing some difficulties, that's the first thing we focus on. – Songbird (a social care provider)

The critical understanding from the statement by Songbird is not the focus on the correctness of the language, but in the way the researcher can critically evaluate their interactions with the population by putting the participants’ perspectives at the forefront of the language.

Reflection from researcher:

I felt so stupid that day. Two seconds into my interview with Songbird and they're correcting my language and explaining to me what I should know about the homeless population. Did I not just write three chapters about hidden and homeless populations? How did I miss the first-person language?! How did I not know this?! How did my chair not see this?! This is my second interview with a participant that is not homeless, and right off the start they completely correct my entire form of language about the population to be culturally and ethically considerate of their person, and not just their current experience. I can’t thank Songbird enough for correcting me.

Consider the statement from Professor about their willingness, going out of their way, to hire research assistants who have experience working with people who are homeless for data collection, and moreover, to be critical when there was evidence that researchers might not have the right qualifications to manage the population appropriately.

I use mostly nursing and medical and public health students to do the questions, or to do the hands-on research. And they should have experience working with the
population. Because the kids [who are homeless] can always pick out a fraud, or pick out someone who doesn't know their stuff. I was consulting on a project for [a University in the South].

The professor went on to say that faculty may also embark on research with the homeless in a naive way that could prove disastrous.

This team of a junior PhD student and a faculty member was like ‘we're gonna start doing stuff with foster care kids’… ‘we're going to test how they are using social media’. I'm like, whoa (!), you guys have no experience working with child protection and you don't even know the first thing about the red tape to get access to those kids in child protection! You can’t do that! So, again, I found it key to have great research assistants that know the kids, know how to talk to the kids, know the laws, and know-how to deal with situations. – Professor (a researcher)

Chef provided help in understanding the ethical considerations of working with homeless populations without any background or formal training in working with a population that might require increased care and attention. Chef shared a story about a friend, who did not have formal training for social care work, but found that working with the population took time, effort, and understanding.

I have a friend that started serving in a soup kitchen, and the people there didn’t respond the way she wanted. She didn’t feel like she belonged there. She wanted to interact and to help with more than just soup, but the people [experiencing homelessness] didn’t want to interact with her. But when she showed she was serious, after a month straight of being there, showing she would follow through and be there again, the guards went down, and people were more inclined to share those things, share their stories with her. – Chef (a social care provider)

Building a level of trust with the population adds trustworthiness to the researcher, or social care provider, in this case, working with people who are experiencing homelessness. Chef continues to elaborate on the idea:

So I think a lot of it is consistency, giving people a place to speak and acknowledging that ‘I don't have an agenda for you’. I think that when people feel like they're being treated as a project, I think that there's a feeling of ‘man, my mom tried doing this, it's not going to work with you’. So I feel like a lot of it, if
we're just trying to get candid information, you really have to say: help me understand this, help me understand. – Chef (a social care provider)

Chef contributed a lot to this research by adding the context of effort, consistency in showing up, and the importance of understanding the role of ethical research. Many researchers, like myself, like Professor, and Graduate: we do not have the formal training to answer the bigger questions about social or emotional issues that the population might have. However, we can become reliable and highly knowledgeable of local resources that are out there for them. We can be ethical researchers that homeless participants are willing to invest their time and instill their trust in, knowing that their lived experiences are the ethical grounding for the critical researcher with homeless populations.

Programmer explained a unique part of their position of working as an intake specialist at an overnight shelter. Professor described people who were experiencing homelessness as having unique disadvantages that social care providers need to consider.

I've been working with people who don't have [copies of their] papers, they’re what we consider not document ready. They don't have a driver's license or ID, and they don't have a birth certificate or social security card. You can't get a job if you don't have those things, and you certainly can’t get a place to live. And then if you don't have any of those documents, it's hard to get new ones because you have to provide identification to get identification! So that's what you have to be ready for. Some of the people that come here, they can't read, you have to read the paperwork to them. They’re functioning people, most of them, they just don't have anywhere or any way to get started, and you have to be ready to work with people at that level. – Programmer (a social care provider)

**Researchers Must Know Resources to Support Vulnerability:**

**Methodological Consideration**

For researchers, there is a critical similarity between the relationship they have with the person experiencing homelessness and how they will interact with them. In this case, understanding that the participants might not be at the level of documentation and
literacy that you have. If a researcher is collecting data, they need to be prepared to manage situations where they must use a witnessed consent in order to conduct research with participants who cannot provide basic identification, and that they might not be able to comprehend written documents. Note that the opposite may be true, some homeless participants may be highly literate and may be put off by researchers who assume otherwise. Regardless, this does not minimize the person experiencing homelessness, but puts the critical awareness of the potential situation on the researcher and their framework for managing data collection with a population that might have different needs.

Professor went into detail about the idea that researchers need to try and understand the role of the participant in homeless research. Professor works mainly with youth who are homeless, but the idea is the same for any person who is experiencing homelessness.

I think knowing the trauma and the hardships that people deal with is the biggest part of best practices for research with homeless populations. It goes way beyond homelessness, especially for young adults and kids. They have a lot of the same past traumas. So I think when you want to know about research methods, about best practices for vulnerable populations, I think that's hitting it on the head [understanding the trauma and hardships of experiencing homelessness].

Professor went on to give examples of trauma, a personal example from their research conversations, and key areas for care, saying youth are probably bouncing from one system to the other so often, like kids who are in jail, they get released, and they end up at the shelter. They trade one system for the other. It makes me think about a conversation I had yesterday with some researchers that want to do pregnancy prevention work in homeless shelters, and they asked what's unique to homelessness. What do we need to know? And I said, you need to know there's a higher risk that they might engage in risk behaviors and they might have a higher level of past trauma. But really, the sex education that we do for high school can be the same sex education that you do for the homeless youth, you know? We can use the same practices, we just have
to be mindful of what we're doing. If you're working with homeless youth, I think it's all about keeping up with healthy youth development and resiliency framework and use trauma-informed care. – Professor (a researcher)

It is essential to understand the unique vulnerabilities of the participants involved, and that starts with the researcher accepting that their sample might have unique vulnerabilities. It also includes the researcher making an effort to prepare for each participant. This is not a static idea that relates to the regulatory protection of the participants, but the researcher's methodological framework. Protecting the welfare of the participants is always important, and should be done through the regulatory process and the researchers continued education of the resources available. Through their professional training, knowledge and methodological framework, researchers should have knowledge of context in order to understand the participants' potential vulnerabilities and how they can professionally manage the potential needs of the participants.

Of course, the hardest part with preparation is that you do not always know what you might expect, and the critical similarity across the data is that you need to be prepared for multiple situations. Researchers need to consider their connection to the sample and how they can relationally manage the needs of the population, and themselves. The best way to do so is through time, effort, and understanding of the sample and resources available. Consider Matt-Man and their experience with homelessness and how they perceive their experience as different as others.

We just need you to understand that we’re not like everyone else. We’re not on drugs. We’re not up all night. We’re not causing trouble. We’re trying to get back on our feet, get a place for the baby. You have to know that about us. Sometimes it feels really weird being in here [at the day shelter] because we just don’t feel like we fit in. – Matt-Man (a person experiencing homelessness)
Matt-Man and Poison Ivy were the last types of participants I expected to interview within this study. They were experiencing homelessness, expecting a child, living as a married couple, and actively tried to stay hidden by not looking homeless during the day and camping in a hidden location at night. Yet, Matt-Man and Poison Ivy had been experiencing homelessness for over six months, making them part of the population of interest and part of the sample within the day shelter where I was conducting my research. I have no formal health training for working with pregnant participants and I have no training as a counselor for potentially working with a married couple who are experiencing extreme hardships like homelessness. While as a researcher this would not be an extensive part of my role the critical lens I apply to the research tells me that I should be prepared to work with and manage situations that stem from the research with increased awareness of vulnerabilities and protection for the welfare of the participants; but how does this work for needs of a participant who is in the advanced stage of pregnancy?

Grandma talked about their experience, and how they also felt different from the rest of the homeless population. When I asked them how they would expect a researcher to act when approaching them their answer was simple—be kind.

I think if you want to talk to me…to be part of your research, [then] just approach me with kindness. It’s tough out here [pointing at the shelter]. This isn’t a place I want to be. I’d love to talk to you about lots of stuff, like my daughters, or my grandbabies, but that’s not what we talk about here, is it? We talk about rules and regulations, about what papers you have, and what papers you need to have, and what time are you going to go to what meeting, and when is the office open, and that kind of stuff. So, if you want to interview me for research, just be kind. – Grandma (a person experiencing homelessness)

For most of the participants in this study, their responses to my questions about participating in the research were overlaid with the context of an appropriate
understanding of their lived experience. The critical similarity about the responses was that the approach of the researcher and their ability to relate as something other than a researcher was the most important part of the methodological framework.

You got to know that I’m not just a total mess. I’ve been through a lot. I’ve dealt with lots of abuse, men that beat on me, but that’s not all that I am. That’s part of the problem, you know? They just want to deal with you as some broken thing, talking to counselors and social workers. I just need some help with laundry sometimes, maybe some money to get some [fast food] or cigarettes. – Texas (a person experiencing homelessness)

If you want to talk to me, just come and talk to me. If I don't want to talk, I'll tell you to fuck off [smiles]. That doesn't mean I hate you or something, or you should be scared, just leave me alone. Maybe tomorrow I'll want to talk, if I feel like it. I don't know, just ask, but don't expect anything special. – Jeffro Gets (a person experiencing homelessness)

You got any money? That would help [laughing]. No, I’m kidding. I think, just treat me like I’m not garbage, that would be the first thing. Just say hello. – Slim Jim (a person experiencing homelessness)

Most people take some time to warm up to me. I’m a tree [smiles], so I don’t look all soft and cuddly. People take some time to warm up to me, but they know me around here. They know I’ll take care of things that need taken care of. They know they can trust me, so just ask around and you’ll get to know who I am. Or, I’ll tell you straight to your face if you ask! – Tree (a person experiencing homelessness)

People have talked to me before. They’ve been around and gave me some things, asked me questions. Nobody ever really got me in trouble or anything, so that’s all I care about. I don’t really know what to say. If you ask me a question I’ll answer it in some way. – Shopping Cart (a person experiencing homelessness)

Just do your research, I don't know. What do you want to find out? What are you going to do? Learn about how it sucks to be homeless, that we're all pigs, we trash everything and sleep on benches so now you can't sit on benches? Are you going to learn about the cops and how they give us shit for everything? I don't do anything and the cops come and tell me to leave. "You can't be here". – LeLe (a person experiencing homelessness)

The critical similarity between the stakeholders who were homeless in this research was that they need extra consideration during interactions with other people. The
critical methodologist has to be the one that takes that consideration into action by preparing for the unexpected. Continued education of the resources to manage the vulnerabilities of the population is important. Continued reflection of the researcher's role in the data collection is important.

Reflection from researcher:

I still question so many of my actions. Did I do that one thing right? Did I say the right thing? What should I have done with Matt-Man and Poison Ivy? I feel like I know them now, but they’re literally going to be sleeping outside, homeless, in a tent hidden in the bushes and Poison Ivy might have a baby at any time. How do I walk away from that? If they’re my friends, shouldn’t I do something more? I don’t know how to deal with kind of stuff. It’s been months now since our interview. Did they have the baby? Where are they at? They’re not out there with the baby…?

Self-Care for Providers and Researchers:

Methodological Consideration

Expecting the unexpected does not always mean for the participant and how their lived experience might warrant some sort of informed methodological and ethical framework, but also for how the researcher might manage their interactions with the population and how they will manage their own lived experience. Consider the stories from the social care provider stakeholders, and how they have to manage their experiencing working with a population that has increased vulnerabilities.

I work with so many different kinds of people and sometimes they tell me their stories, and there are some pretty terrible stories. I know people who've been through sexual trauma, psychological trauma, everything that you can think of. The first year I worked at the shelter somebody tried to commit suicide at the shelter. Just seeing the demons that people have to go through and fight with. And then working here at [the non-profit organization] I feel like it's more difficult because I'm so distanced from them. Now, I'm not doing direct service so I could see somebody experiencing something, but it's not my job anymore to help. So I just tell somebody, hey, this is happening, you have to do something about it. – Songbird (a social care provider)
When I was working at the [overnight] shelter, I think the hardest part for me was seeing that so many people had this opportunity to get clean, save money, and then transition into housing but would fall off the wagon and start drinking and doing drugs, then they can no longer stay at the shelter. So then they're back out in the street again. It’s difficult to know that it’s going to happen, you are going to see people at their worst and then it’s going to get even worse, and you can’t do anything about it. Sometimes, with families, one of the parents would mess up [break the no tolerance substance use policy] and so the whole family would have to leave and then there's a homeless family again. You have to be ready to deal with that kind of stuff and know that there's only so much you can do. It’s not easy. – Officer (a social care provider)

I think the biggest challenge for me is watching people destroy themselves on drugs. I can’t control it. I can kick them out [of the shelter], but that doesn't change their life. It's hard to watch, because there's people that we all get really close to...and they’re either drug addicts or alcoholics. And then they'll get clean and sober, and you get really close to them, and you feel like you're really helping them but then they'll go off the wagon and back into that life. It is so hard to watch that. You just can’t prepare yourself for that. – Leader (a social care provider)

The data from the social care providers were consistent throughout this research when talking about the increased difficulty of working with people who have experience with past and present trauma, substance abuse, and mental illness. Leader spoke about the hardest part of managing their interactions with the population, and how they have to change their perspective about the person experiencing homelessness into a different context to better understand their experience.

The hardest part of working with the homeless is that I can still be naive and not understand. Sometimes I have to admit that to somebody and say, you know, you told me that, but I didn't get it. Because I really don't live in your world, and now that you explained it, it makes sense. And I catch myself being from my middle-class white culture instead of putting myself in their culture and trying to see things from their perspective. – Leader (a social care provider)

The critical researcher must use the same perspective to be an ethical researcher to care for both the participant and themselves. Understanding your role in the research, your background, your motivation, and your skillset is critically important to the methodology
of the research. When sampling hidden and homeless populations, thoughtful consideration of the impact of the process for the participant and the researcher must be actively considered before the start of the research, during, and after. Expectations about the way the researcher will manage each situation and the experience of the research itself must be given attention. Caretaker talked about the role of expectations and how they can change over time and be different for everyone.

I feel like some of the challenges with any type of social services is that a lot of people come in very green and excited to change the world, thinking they’re going to impact this individual and see change quickly. It’s the same with research. I remember that from grad school, the romance of social work and doing good. But that’s not the reality of what working with the homeless is. And so those small wins, reframing how you accept a win. And what a win looks like, is huge. And so with difficult clients, if I can deescalate you, so you’re not dropping F-bombs, and you’re not in my face for the next engagement, that's a win. And so the fact that they we’re even able to engage and be like, okay, I acknowledge you and I acknowledge some kind of relationship, that's huge. One of the things that you can see when you're doing social services is if you can build that relationship, you are more likely to impact change, the same thing for counseling, same thing for social work, same thing for research – Caretaker (a social care provider)

Caretaker provides more context to the idea that the researcher must have expectations that they can manage to be an ethical researcher. Having a relational framework, grounded in the needs of the sample, with consideration to the researcher's experience becomes critically important to understanding the ethical reasoning that researchers studying homelessness must contemplate and act on. Furthermore, the self-care of the researcher can happen if the researcher continues to evaluate their role in the data collection and reflect on the interaction with the sample. Working to manage the expectations for the sample, and the researcher can help build trust between the stakeholders of the research. Management added more context to this idea by relating how they stay persistent and used their experiences to build trust.
Something that I've learned that I think everybody should know is to not give up on somebody [who is experiencing homelessness]. You’re going to get people that don’t want your help, don’t want to talk to you, they’re going to use harsh language and calls you names. I mean, for most of them it'll take them a long time for them to build trust with anybody. They've most likely been let down time and time again, by what or whoever it is, family, friends, other practitioners.... And then you have a new person coming in saying, I'm going to help you and they just don't trust people. You know, it's hard to trust somebody when you've been let down in your life, so I'm not giving up on it. Not giving up on somebody just because they say I don't want your help, because they may not want your help today, but maybe in a month, they'll say, hey, you've been here I've seen that you've been here for me, I want your help. I want to talk. – Management (a social care provider)

For the researcher, they might not have the time and resources to spend months collecting data, but they can supplement the amount of time with listening, trying to understand, and consideration of the participant's needs in order to become a more relationally ethical researcher. The hardest part of being an ethical researcher with homeless populations is understanding their needs and concerns, and how you might manage them. Researchers might do this through the reflection of their interactions, or through the methodological framework they use, but understanding that you are actively researching with a population that has vulnerabilities and needs that extra attention becomes categorically important to being a relationally ethical researcher.

I asked Graduate to tell me something that researchers should know when working with homeless populations and they focused on the perceptions that society has for people experiencing homelessness and the context that has for researchers. Furthermore, they gave context to the way researchers can be ethically considerate to the population by becoming engaged with their research and to use sampling methods that allow for interaction and employ relationships with the population.

I feel like we as a society we have concluded that you need to have a house, you need to have kids—it's like keeping up with [a certain status]. You have to do
these things, because this is what you've been told to do. But in reality, that's not what everybody wants to do. So I think that when you go into working with and researching homeless individuals, don't assume that they outright need your help, because they may not want your help, and they may not need help. They might be happy in their own little bubble. And for some people, they find it shocking. I know that for some people, they can’t understand why homeless people wouldn’t want help. They think they just need a home and they end up just generalizing them. They’re putting them into a box. You can’t treat people like that. [Researchers] have to consider that. If you can develop a relationship with somebody that's homeless, in whatever community you're working with, I think that that could open doors that you otherwise might not have access to.

Graduate went on to underscore how certain sampling methods treat people as little more than a number yet are face-to-face experiences.

I think that if you can develop relationships with people instead of just looking at something like the point-in-time count, which to me is almost unethical, hey we're going to count you. Just count you as homeless, we don't care anything else about you. How old are you? Ok count that. Do you identify as something other than heterosexual? Great, we're just going to count you. Are you a minor? Great, we're just going to count you. I think it exacerbates the problem where you just do the minimum research of counting and then move on. You don't know anyone's story. You don't know anything about them other than checking a couple of boxes. And if you're really looking for a sample, you have to talk to someone, get to know them. And then you'll find someone that will give you a major insight into a specific subset of the population. Open doors to more people and information that you wouldn't have found without that story. – Graduate (a researcher)

How Did the Explorations of the Researcher's History, Position, and Reflexivity Impact this Research?

The exploration of reflexivity in this research study added three distinct contributions to this research. First, as you have already seen throughout this chapter, reflexive interpretations from my perspective as a researcher was overlaid during the analysis of the data and in the themes previously presented. Second, reflexive themes emerged from the data that were present throughout the 9-month process or data collection, analysis, and writing. These themes will be presented in the next section and were analyzed as a contribution to the findings in Chapter 5. Third, the methodological
framework for other researchers working with homeless and hidden populations
developed following the completion of the analysis and the triangulation with a fellow researcher.

**Reflexive Themes**

It feels impossible for me to say with certainty how the role of reflexivity impacted this research in a way that does not sound self-serving, arrogant, or overconfident. While I have spent time in my life as a person who was homeless, I have spent the majority of my life as a housed person. These are the reflexive themes that I can share with relative certainty as a stakeholder in this research:

**You are not your research.** The separation of the research and the researcher is easy sometimes. I have worked with dozens of secondary data sets and never felt for a second that I was attached to the data. I might have had some sort of desire to perform the analysis well, or to provide impactful results from the analysis, but I never felt attached. This type of research, the type of research that requires a level of personal interaction with the participants from the researcher felt different.

Reflection from researcher:

I don't know why I haven't shared my experience yet? I haven't told a single person that I have experienced many of the same issues because I've experienced homelessness. Why did I make it a point to tell classrooms full of academics? Why have I littered my dissertation with my personal experience but I haven't told a single participant? I don't think I'm ashamed at all. And even if I was, why would that matter here? This would be the last place something like that would matter in a shameful way! If anything, there is a better connection to the participants in this study by having a shared lived experience.

The separation of the researcher and the research had an impact on this research.

From the onset of the research, I knew that relational ethics mattered. I discussed this
earlier in the ethics portion of this chapter, but for some reason, my reflexive analysis of the research pointed directly to a self-imposed separation of my personal experiences from the research. My history as a person experiencing homelessness and as a researcher of homeless populations was helpful when interacting with all types of stakeholders, but somehow, I was separated.

Reflection from researcher: Point-In-Time Survey

I didn’t do much talking today. Today was all about observation. I didn’t want to be part of this survey, I just wanted to participate in the process. This was real research, significant research, and lucky enough for me, it’s not mine. I get to be a part of it, but I don’t have to do any of the leg work, paperwork, or analysis. I remember being surveyed in San Francisco. I remember a research team with a video camera asking questions of me and a couple of friends on the street. That was pretty insignificant. I also remember a bigger study, about homelessness and drug use. That was a significant study. They paid real money. I didn’t even fit the sample. I wasn’t an active drug user, but I was homeless and I looked the part enough. I remember lying through my teeth to get the money! I wonder if anyone surveyed today lied. Did they stretch the truth? Would I blame that at all if they did? I don’t think so. The one person we talked to today, during the point-in-time, we gave them extra socks as part of the compensation package because we knew we wouldn’t find anyone else.

**Check your biases.** I remember when I really started getting interested in homeless research as a line of study and getting connected to the feeling of working with a population that needed help. It felt good, it felt real, but it wasn’t entirely healthy. I felt connected in a way that didn’t make sense… yes, I had been homeless once, years ago, lifetimes ago… and I was a street kid, practically chose to be homeless. I had a way out, and I took it. I wasn’t that person anymore, and in reality, I was barely that person in the first place. Yet, I want to be the one to relate to this population? I want to be the one who changes the way people think about homeless research? The real problem is, even after full immersion with this group, I’m still not that person, and I’m not my research. I can’t
be this thing that I want to fix, but somehow I feel like I can’t fix this thing unless I can be close to it.

**You will be tested.** The applied process of researching hidden and homeless populations takes time, effort, trust, and acceptance. In this study I had no intention to compare homeless research and sampling methods to any other type of research. However, this type of research, working with hidden and homeless populations will test the researcher's skills, both personal and professional.

Reflection from researcher:

The first day I walked into the day shelter I knew I was in for something I hadn't felt in many years. There was an unease in the air, a staleness that permeated the surroundings with nervousness and anxiety. The funny thing is though, it wasn't so much from the homeless at the shelter, it was from the staff. It flooded my mind, as it does now just thinking about it, how the homeless can be so much more at ease, have so much comfort in their existence, while every housed person around them is walking on eggshells. This isn't something that happens just in the shelters either, it's every day, in every major city, on every street corner. The same unease that the car passenger has while waiting for the stoplight to change as the homeless person sits there next to them asking for change. Why does this matter? How does this impact the research? It impacts every decision I make as a researcher interacting with the homeless population. I can spend hours and hours talking about my past experiences and my 'researcher’s lens' in preparation for my research work with the homeless, but that doesn't help for a single second when I'm faced with the real situation.

Someone started screaming from the back of the shelter. Loud screams, and noise. Someone was definitely slamming something, maybe a door or a microwave or something. I had only been in here for 5 minutes, waiting to talk to someone about possibly conducting research there, but I knew who staff was and who patrons were. The woman behind the counter, one of the staff, kind of smiled, a nervous smile, not scared, but tense. Tense like watching someone about to jump off a high dive. Suddenly a person comes out from the back. Apparently, there was a mix up with the laundry machines. I tried not to eavesdrop too much but couldn't help it. I was there, and so was this situation.

The process of immersion into the sample is important to good qualitative research and can help provide the researcher with increased access to potential
participants, insider knowledge, and quality observations. Yet, the process of immersion also means that there are moments, good and bad, that you might not expect or be ready for as a researcher, or as a person participating in a group.

Even with my experience, I wasn’t always ready for the type of situations that I was given throughout the research. I already spoke in detail about my experiences with Texas, and their struggles with recalling their past and present experiences with homelessness. If you don’t remember, Texas started crying during my interview with them when talking about their past and present reasons for being homeless. I can reflect now about the situation with certainty that I am a better researcher because of my experience with Texas. I also feel like a better person. Not because I did the right thing, or had the right answer, or knew what to do, but because I was tested as a researcher and as a person with a tough situation and I know I acted and treated the situation and the person with care and understanding. I know that I have a richer data set because of this, because this was my first interview, my first interaction with stakeholders, and I was tested from the onset with situations that required an increased level of care and understanding.

Summary of Chapter IV

In Chapter IV, the study’s findings were discussed. The twenty in-depth interviews that were obtained from the stakeholders were transcribed and then used in conducting the thematic analysis. Reflexive contributions from my experience as researcher were overlaid throughout the analysis. The findings were then further organized into three broad sections based on the research questions: (a) Methodological considerations stakeholders in homeless research identify with hidden-population
sampling methods, (b) What areas for ethical considerations do stakeholders in homeless research with hidden-populations identify with hard-to-reach sampling methods, and (c) How does the explorations of the researcher's history, position, and reflexivity impact this research?

These findings are discussed further in Chapter Five, leading to methodological recommendations for stakeholders in hidden and homeless research.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

In Chapter V, I address (a) the richness of the data collected, (b) a discussion of major convergent and reflexive themes that emerged to help define and answer each of the research questions, (c) conclusions, and finally (d) recommendations for change and future research.

The purpose of this study was to: (a) gain a methodological understanding of hidden population sampling techniques and to offer insight into which approach is best suited for a given researcher’s sample; and (b) to provide increased methodological understanding of how to best research hidden populations like the homeless by providing researchers, social care providers, and governing bodies with detailed guidelines for their work with the homeless.

A qualitative in-depth interview approach was taken to offer insight into the development of methodological considerations that reflected the voices of all stakeholders involved in homeless research. The stakeholders in this research were people experiencing homelessness, homeless population researchers, and social care providers. Therefore, the rationale of this study, using a critical theory approach, was to create a methodological guide for researchers, social care providers and governing bodies to follow when researching with homeless populations due to the lack of an overarching methodological guideline to follow.
Based on the literature review and a critical theoretical foundation, I answered the following research questions:

Q1 What methodological considerations do stakeholders in homeless research identify with hidden-population sampling methods?

Q2 What areas for ethical consideration do stakeholders of homeless research with hidden-populations identify with hard-to-reach sampling methods?

Q3 How does the exploration of the researcher’s history, position and reflexivity impact this research?

Discussion of Major Findings from each Research Question

Richness of Data Collected

The richness of the data during a study such as this is highly contingent on the interviewer’s past and present relationship with the population. Grounding this research in a critical theoretical approach, through this study I sought to amplify the voices and lived experiences of everyone involved with the phenomenon of homelessness to answer the questions of how to adequately and ethically sample homeless populations. Therefore, when collecting the data, I utilized an in-depth interview methodology that applied a critical lens to the application of the interviews. Furthermore, a reflexive examination of my history as a homeless teenager, my work as a homeless advocate, and as a graduate student conducting prior research with homeless populations were employed to add further context to the data collected from the stakeholders.

During the current study, I found that there was a connection between the culture of the people experiencing homelessness and where the research was conducted. Furthermore, the researcher’s bias and expertise are connected to the way the sampling method is approached. I found that sampling methodology in terms of technical ability was the least important skill needed to be effective for an ethical researcher of hidden and
homeless populations. This means that the specific sampling methods outlined in Chapter II all have the same overarching connection to the data in this study: the researcher’s role in the sampling of homeless populations is complex and needs extra consideration regarding the culture, needs, and bias of researcher when sampling persons that are experiencing homelessness.

**Discussion of Research Question One: Methodological Considerations**

**Not a singular population.** Researchers should not expect to have a singular sample when researching hidden and homeless populations. This is not a limitation to the research but an artifact of the diversity within the homeless phenomenon. I found the sample in this study to fall within four different types of participants: hidden, homeless, precariously sheltered, and precariously housed. For researchers, it is important to understand that people that actively attempt to stay hidden might seek social care, even for a short time.

Researchers must take into consideration that there is a fear of law enforcement for the person experiencing homelessness, and there should be an expectation of trepidation from the person experiencing homelessness towards a researcher until there has been some level of relationship and trust built. Social care networks, like shelters, should be considered quality channels for building trust and forming relationships. Using pre-existing relationships built in the community through social care networks can provide a personal building block for the researcher. Members of social care networks are aware of the different types of homelessness that they need to provide for and can be considered experts in the sample and population under study. Researchers should be
aware that the sample will have different needs and lived experiences, and therefore they might have different sampling considerations.

**Homeless culture by setting.** Understanding the location of the individual and where the research will take place is critical to the researcher and the persons experiencing homelessness. The sampling methodology chosen by the researcher should be defined by the setting of the study. Critical understanding of the culture by the researcher in terms of the setting and the person’s lived experience within that setting is principal to sampling homeless populations. It is critical to understand that researchers have the burden of being culturally responsive in the research setting, not the social care networks or the people experiencing homelessness. Understanding that the hidden and homeless culture is related to the setting is vital for culturally responsive research with hidden and homeless populations. Researchers cannot expect to have the same interactions in each setting for each participant in their study.

**Homeless culture by regulation.** Understanding of the connection between the regulations and homelessness in the population is key to understating the location and culture of the sample. The culture of the population will be directly affected by the regulations in the area surrounding the sample. It is critical for researchers seeking to sample hidden and homeless populations to access them at the point within the sampling frame that has the least amount of regulatory oversite for those people experiencing homelessness. Regulation can be something as small as understanding that the culture inside a shelter has oversite and rules pertaining to the shelter, while outside of the shelter the rules are different, people are not controlled by the regulation of the shelter the will change the culture of the people. Researchers might have different sampling results based
on the culture and should be aware that there is a connection between the accessibility of
the homeless population and legal or procedural regulation. The culture can be open and
visible if regulation and legal boundaries are minimal. The culture can be closed-off and
hidden if the regulation and legal boundaries are high.

Understanding the cultural implications of the population under study is important
for creating the best methods for sampling hidden and homeless populations.
Understanding the cultural settings and regulations and finding the key locations that
persons experiencing homelessness reside is directly relatable to all sampling methods
considered in Chapter II. Through this research I found places of residents to be day
shelter, overnight shelter, transitional housing shelters, food banks, rescue missions, and
homeless coalitions.

Selection bias is real and that’s okay. The critical similarity between all
researchers interviewed in this study is that they were able to theorize about, locate, and
sample from a population of persons experiencing homelessness. They had problems with
sampling, made mistakes at times, and were tested with situations outside of their
expertise. However, they conducted research and have data to contribute to the homeless
research field. A critical similarity is that they all had some source of rapport created to
help find at least part of their sample. A critical similarity is that there were challenges. A
critical similarity is that they researched a population that is hard-to-reach and can have
multiple aspects of hiddenness.

Discussion of Research Question
Two: Ethical Considerations

Researcher is the least important role in homeless research. Developing
relationships between stakeholders is ethical research when sampling people that are
homeless. Consideration of all stakeholders, from the person experiencing homelessness to the researcher, is ethically and culturally competent research for this population. Understanding that researchers have to be so much more than methodologists is ethical research. There are considerations to make that encapsulate issues of fear, abuse, mistrust, and misunderstanding with the population of interest. The researcher should apply ethical sampling methodology by establishing comfort, support, trust, and understanding for the population. Furthermore, understanding the insufficiencies that researchers have to adequately manage situations that require specific medical and emotional expertise is ethical research, is paramount. Researchers will most likely need to manage unique situations that will be beyond the scope of their training and skill level. Taking the time to adequately examine and reexamine where their skills are grounded, and where do they need outside help is ethical research when researching homeless populations.

**Researchers must know resources to support vulnerability.** Researchers must be aware of the potential vulnerabilities of their sample and have a working knowledge of the resources available to them that goes above and beyond the level of consent form documentation. Researchers do not need to be experts in specific areas of vulnerability but need to be aware of their own expertise and knowledge base in order to ethically sample homeless populations.

**Self-Care for providers and researchers.** Understanding that the researcher’s role is dynamic and involves relational ethics that ask the researcher to work closely with the population they research means that there will be issues and situations that are difficult to manage. Researchers need to practice self-care in order to manage their role in
the research and to adequately engage with the sample and understand their own sampling bias.

**Discussion of Research Question**

**Three: Researcher Reflexivity**

**Reflexivity matters.** Reporting on reflexivity in research representations can inform research consumers of the researcher's biases, challenges, and decisions. Furthermore, the role of reflexivity while sampling hidden and homeless populations can help provide needed context to the selection process of a sample that is considered hard-to-reach. Reflexivity is a form of data that can be analyzed and subjected to the same analysis as the data from interviews, surveys, or statistical procedures. Reflexivity is a form of context that can be added to the research to guide the reader of the researcher to understand to motives that correspond to the procedures.

**Implications for Researchers**

**Key Informants**

The findings from this study confirm with the literature (Marshall, 1996) that states key informants need to be relevant, knowledgeable, willing to communicate. This research expands on this finding in that researchers must have these same traits and be culturally competent with the setting and regulation to use Key Informants methodology to its best consideration.

**Snowball Sampling Method**

The findings from this study confirm with the literature (Brañas et al., 2016; Lopes et al., 1996; TenHouten, 2017; Watters & Biernacki, 1989) that states snowball sampling must start with locating and sampling people that are experiencing homelessness where and while they are homeless. Through this research, I found that a
deep understanding of the cultural importance of the sample of interest is paramount to this sampling methodology. If the researcher has consideration of the culture, setting, regulation, and understands that there will be bias then snowball sampling methodology can start with an informed participant.

**Targeted Sampling**

The findings from this study confirm with the literature (Carlson et al., 1994; Watters & Biernacki, 1989) that states that the strength in accurately targeting a homeless population is in the ability to respond to the changing characteristics of the targeted sub-populations of the sample. Through this research, I found the realization that the sample will have sub-populations is a methodological consideration that researchers must add to their research plan. Competency of the sub-populations is important, but understanding that there will be sub-populations present in the data is vital to the sampling of hidden and homeless populations.

**Representative Sampling Methodology**

The findings from this study confirm with the literature (Marpsat & Firdion, 1999) that states homeless populations have extreme difficulties in terms of a heightened level of vulnerabilities and can require that researchers have the time, training, resources and ability to manage these unique considerations. Through this research, I found that the most important consideration for researchers is to understand that they might not be able to fully represent the population, that there will most likely be some form of bias in the data, and that is okay. It is important to understand that the population will have unique difficulties that require researchers to seek out certain individuals in the population based on the researcher’s skills, comfort level, and ability to manage the relationships with the
sample. Furthermore, some participants will actively stay hidden, reject communication with researchers, or not have the ability to adequately communicate with the researcher. This will untimely add bias to the sample, and perhaps not represent the population completely. However, the importance is that researchers manage the sample ethically and appropriately regardless of potential bias in the data. Thoroughly sharing the experience of the researcher through the process of reflexivity will help manage the bias by sharing the sampling experience with consumers of the research to understand what portions of the sample might be misrepresented.

**Street-Intercept Methodology**

Consideration that anyone attempting to research vulnerable populations like people experiencing homelessness must have the knowledge and experience with the specific region the sample will be drawn from. Street-intercept methodology requires personal judgment from the research that has ethical and methodological issues. There is both (a) an ethical issue that you might wrongly indicate someone as homeless and (b) that you might add error to the sample by either misrepresenting or underrepresenting the target population. Mistakes by researchers can and will happen, and understanding the impact on the research and the people of the population is hard, if not impossible to understand. Awareness of the cultural and regulatory issues in the target population is vital to researchers when conducting street-intercept survey methods.

**Respondent Driven Sampling (RDS)**

The findings from this study confirm with the literature (Heckathorn, 1997) that states there will bias in the sample that has a singular respondent locating a greater number of other respondents to sample. RDS works as a quantitative sampling technique
that blends a form of snowball sampling at the onset of the sampling by using members of the population to help locate other members that are hidden or hard to find. While I did not examine the quantitative methodology of RDS during this study, I can confirm the need for comprehensive and appropriate statistical measures if a researcher wishes to apply probability sampling. There will be bias in the sample, not only from the respondents chosen to help locate members, but from the researcher's choice of the respondent and central location of the respondent. The researcher’s interests and decisions also “drive” RDS methodology through the selection of the “respondent”.

Furthermore, ethical consideration to the researcher’s history, awareness of the social care networks, and the ability to add context to the sample through reflexivity can add to the generalizability of the probability sampling. Providing readers with a detailed guide of the researcher’s motives, bias, perceptions, and actions when presenting the results of the statistical analysis can greatly add to the validity of the sampling in adding context to the non-random nature of the sample in the form of thick qualitative descriptions.

**Time Location Sampling**

The findings from this study confirm with the literature (Karon & Wejnert, 2014) that states hidden and homeless populations tend to cluster around social care networks and social care centers. I found that even individuals that tended to stay hidden from both society and social outreach still had a desire to seek out certain social care centers at some point. Selection of the time and the location of the sampling are again chosen by the researcher and will ultimately have some form of bias attached to those decisions. The researcher’s ability to examine and share their experience from the initial section of the location to the data collection process must be informative and reflexive of the
researcher’s bias to aid in the generalizability of the research. If the research community understands that there will be bias in the data when sampling hidden and homeless populations, then we must work to accept and examine the best way for methodologists to share that bias without fear of damaging their research findings, but to adequately share the entirety of the data.

**Recommendations for Change**

Researching homeless populations is a unique and sometimes daunting task. Attempting to analyze a population that is known to have (1) an unknown number of sub-populations, (2) an unknown level of vulnerability, (3) bias in the sampling, and (4) takes extra expertise from the researcher to have supportive, appropriate interactions with the population is not easy. Understanding the role of the researcher as partially a stakeholder in the research, and not just the methodologist, is important to consider the best way to reliably and ethically sample the population. Consideration of the person experiencing homelessness as a stakeholder in the research not only allows for the researcher to better understand the sample, but to also understand the sub-populations, culture, and bias related to the observation of the homeless phenomenon. Finally, understanding the researcher's role as part of the sampling methodology through a process of reflexivity can enhance the validity of the sampling data to expand on the known bias and influence that the researcher has in the selection, collection, and analysis of the data.

I propose that the researchers ask themselves a series of reflexive questions before the onset of sampling homeless populations. An outline of the proposed set of questions is shown in Appendix G.
Furthermore, this research considers the role of the person experiencing homelessness to have value in its experience and expertise. Consideration of the person, and the ethical obligation of the researcher to share their experiences during the data collection and the analysis. Traditionally, researchers share their bias with a theoretical perspective in the methods section of a study. Yet, they do not share the way the research was impacted by their interactions and bias during the action of the research. When researching hard-to-reach and vulnerable populations like the homeless, a reflexivity analysis of the sampling can add context to the research for the benefit of the study and the consumer of the research.

Researchers who are attempting to sample homeless populations should use a form of the above recommendations to provide people experiencing homelessness with a document that informs them of their role in the research. Stepping beyond the guidance of ethics procedural review by the IRB, researchers should inform persons that are experiencing homelessness of these types of questions to help elicit more thoughtful and trustworthy relationships with their sample. An outline of the proposed guide for people experiencing homelessness is shown in Appendix H.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Future recommendations for research, based on this study, are to continue the consideration of all stakeholders when researching homeless populations with an emphasis on the person experience homelessness and the role of the researcher in the research. Further examination of the non-probability sampling methods like Street
Intercept, Key Informants, Snowball Sampling, Targeted Sampling, and Representative Sampling with an emphasis on the examination of subpopulations that are hidden or hard to reach is warranted.

**Examination of Sub-Populations**

Consideration of the diverse number of sub-populations throughout the homeless population needs to be researched further. Through this research I found four types of basic sub-groupings, presented in Chapter IV as hidden, homeless, precariously housed, and precariously sheltered. Examination of these sub-groupings from a sampling perspective with a larger scale study can help expand the working knowledge of the homeless phenomenon and provide researchers a more detailed guide to build a representative sampling frame.

**Further Study of Researcher Bias**

Understanding that there is bias in the sample, and thus bias in the conclusions is a relevant finding to the study. Research should expand on this with further examination of how bias might affect the outcome of interviews, surveys, and statistical analysis. Concurrent studies with the same population could attempt to tease out the bias that researchers have, either from their selection of participants or from selected participants from informants or social care providers.

**Continued Ethical Examination of Population**

Ethical considerations of hidden and homeless populations should never be considered static and should continue to be updated. Changes in technology, regulation, law enforcement, and people experiencing homelessness will continue to change ethical considerations that methodologists need to consider when researching the
population. An examination of this area during any research with people who are experiencing homeless adds to the field in rich and powerful ways.

**Further Research of Reflexivity’s Role in Generalizability of Probability Sampling Methods**

Understanding how the role of a researcher's reflexivity in the process of sampling participants for study with the use of probability sampling techniques like RDS and Time Location Sampling can help to inform the readers who want to generalize from the research to better understand the validity of the research to their populations. Future research with RDS or Time Location Sampling methods should include a reflexive analysis from the researchers with an emphasis on the samples sub-populations, culture, regulations, and vulnerabilities. Furthermore, there should be self-reported motivations for the selection and rejection of sample participants and their connection to found population characteristics from the statistical analysis. These reflexive accounts should be reported in final research representations.

**Conclusion**

I find that understanding the complexity of sampling methods with homeless populations should be in the context that the population is not easily generalizable. This is a critical understanding for researchers and social care providers. Traditional sampling methods are designed to obtain a sample that can be easily generalized to the population. But what happens when the population cannot be generalized? The answer is to adjust and adapt methodological considerations to fit the needs of the sample and the complexity of the population. Yes, there is a "homeless" connection. Homeless research has considerations that do not translate to other samples or populations. Consideration of
homeless sampling sub-populations, culture, regulation, ethics, and bias are unique to the population. Methodological consideration to the diverse and eclectic population is vital for homeless researchers to understand and share with the larger scientific community. Furthermore, the relationship of the researcher and the selection, examination, and reporting of the findings is unique in sampling hidden and homeless populations and should be adapted with reflexivity to expand the reliability, validity, and generalizability of the research for the consumer of the work. Changing the way to accept and examine the best way for methodologists to share their experience with the research through reflexivity analysis, without fear of damaging their research findings, and to help minimize the bias in the data will make for better methodological research with homeless populations.

Reflection from researcher:

Leader came to me and said they had the first person I should talk to. Ok, I thought, perfect! I’m so excited to get started. Who are they? Who’s it going to be? Hey, I remember them… they… oh yeah, they were the one with the laundry, and the screaming. Well, there you go, let’s do this.
REFERENCES


Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don’t: Researcher’s position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 15*(2), 219-234.


APPENDIX A

SEMISTRUCTURED QUESTIONS
SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONS

Semi-Structured Interview Questions for Each Group

- Hidden Population Research Experts and Social Care Providers
  - How would you describe the homeless population in terms of being hidden?
    - How do you see homeless as hidden? Are the homeless hidden?
    - Why do homeless have to stay hidden?
  - Why work with the homeless?
  - I want to talk about culture, how would you describe the homeless culture that you’ve worked with?
    - How does that culture differ from the homeless individual to a group?
  - From your published work with the homeless, what kind of response have you had from your work?
  - What’s the hardest part of working with the homeless?
    - What challenges you?
  - What methods have you actively employed?
    - Do you have a specific research methodology that you use?
  - How did you find your sample?
  - Tell me about the challenges that you had with your research? What was the hardest part of your research?
  - What about incentive to participate?
    - What form of compensation do you use?
    - Is compensation expected?
  - What advice do you have for other methodologists?
  - What else should I know that I didn’t think to ask?

- Visual Artists
  - Why do you do this?
    - What’s your motivation?
    - Why do you care to highlight the homeless?
  - What’s the most challenging part of your work with the homeless?
  - Tell me about a time that you were scared a time where you wanted out of an interview or setting right after it started?
  - What about incentive to participate?
  - What else should I know that I didn’t think to ask?
  - Can we look at some of you work and talk about the process, the findings, the meaning…etc?

- Homeless Persons
  - Tell me about yourself?
What’s important to you?
Researchers want to find out how best to find different kinds of homeless people so they can be represented in research studies.
- What is your advice on how find and approach homeless people to be in a study?
Have you ever been in a research study before? If so, can you tell me about it?
- How do you think the researchers went about finding you?
I want to talk about the hidden nature of homelessness.
- Do you think the homeless in this area are hidden?
- What kind of things do you do to stay hidden?
- What kind of actions do you take to be visible?
What did I not ask that I should know about?
APPENDIX B

RECRUITMENT E-MAIL FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY
RECRUITMENT E-MAIL FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY

Recruitment Email for Each Participant Group

Recruitment Script for contact with social care providers and researchers. Recruitment of homeless individuals changed on a case-to-case basis. Normal conversational tools, like asking about their day for example, or refereeing to their specific place of work were used in recruitment.

**Homeless social care networks:**

I am contacting you to ask for your permission to participate in a research project about hidden populations. What I mean by this is I want to know the way researchers can best work with homeless populations. I short, I want to interview you (or someone at your facility) about homeless culture, typical daily activities, and other customs that can help researchers better understand the homeless culture and better serve the homeless population. I have much more information that I can share with you about the project if you would like.

Please let me know if this is something that would be acceptable for you.

**Homeless researchers:**

I am contacting you to ask for your permission to participate in a research project about hidden populations. What I mean by this is I want to know the way researchers can best work with homeless populations, and more specifically, the survey methodology you have used in your research. I short, I want to interview you about surveying hidden population, homeless culture, norms and other customs that can help researchers better understand the homeless culture and better serve the homeless population. I have much more information that I can share with you about the project if you would like.

Please let me know if this is something that would be acceptable for you.
APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORMS
Facility Consent Form

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Facility Consent Form

Project Title: Methodological considerations of researching hidden-populations with an emphasis on homeless research sampling methods
Researcher: Tyler Kincaid, Department of Applied Statistics and Research Methods
Phone: 720-987-9901  E-mail: kinc8948@bears.unco.edu
Research Advisor: Dr. Maria Lahman
Phone: 970-351-1603  E-mail: Maria.Lahman@unco.edu

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to provide increased methodological understanding of how to best research hidden populations, specifically homeless populations, and to provide practitioners, researchers, and governing bodies with detailed guidelines for their work with the homeless. Qualitative reflexivity methodology and research ethics with homeless populations will also be examined. In short, qualitative reflexivity methodology is myself, as a researcher, examining how my social standing, past experiences and interactions with the research process change throughout the process of conducting the research.

For the purpose of this study participants will be asked qualitative (interview) questions. The interview process should take somewhere between one half hour and an hour. The interview will be held at a location that is comfortable to you. If not already discussed, we will have a conversation about the location of the interview now. Other than age, there will be no statistical data asked for this study. All questions by the researcher will ask for interpretations and/or perceptions of past and present experiences involving homelessness. For the purpose of reviewing the interview, an audio recording will be conducted during the interview. Any recording made by the researcher will be considered private and respected by the researcher as such. Anonymity for this study is completely up to the specific subject of the study.

Page 1 of 2

(Participant initials here)
It is preferred to use first names only, but if the subjects would like to use a random case number for the recording and record of this interview one will be assigned to them.

Risks to participants as subjects of this study are minimal. The potential risks involve recalling possible traumatic experiences from the past. If participants feel the need to seek professional assistance for any potential risks, two low to no-cost help centers in the Greeley area can provide help. A detailed list of these centers is provided to you with phone numbers and locations. This research also offers some minimal possible benefits of having an opportunity to talk openly about past and present experiences with homelessness. At any point during the interview process that participants start to feel uncomfortable or non-willing to continue with the interview they can discontinue the interview and any record of the interview will be erased.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1910.

____________________________________________________
Subject’s Signature                                           Date

____________________________________________________
Researcher’s Signature                                     Date
Consent Form for Non-Homeless Participants

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Methodological considerations of researching hidden-populations with an emphasis on homeless research sampling methods

Researcher: Tyler Kincaid, Department of Applied Statistics and Research Methods
Phone: 720-987-9901
E-mail: kinc8948@bears.unco.edu

Research Advisor: Dr. Maria Lahman
Phone: 970-351-1603
E-mail: Maria.Lahman@unco.edu

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to provide increased methodological understanding of how to best research hidden populations, specifically homeless populations, and to provide practitioners, researchers, and governing bodies with detailed guidelines for their work with the homeless. Qualitative reflexivity methodology and research ethics with homeless populations will also be examined. In short, qualitative reflexivity methodology is myself, as a researcher, examining how my social standing, past experiences and interactions with the research process change throughout the process of conducting the research.

You will be asked interview questions about homelessness, its hidden nature, culture and the best way to contact (sample) homeless individuals. This interview should last somewhere between one half hour and an hour. The interview will be held at a location that is comfortable to you. If not already discussed, we will have a conversation about the location of the interview now. Other than your age, there will be no statistical data asked of you for this study. All questions by the researcher will ask for your interpretations and/or perceptions of past and present experiences involving homelessness. For the purpose of reviewing the interview with you, an audio recording will be conducted during the interview. At any point during the interview that you would like to stop recording please inform the researcher and your recording will stop. Your decision to record or not record your interview will be respected and honored by the researcher.

(Participant initials here)
Any recording made by the researcher will be considered private and respected by the researcher as such. The transcriptions and recordings will be stored for a period of three years on a locked password protected personal computer. Confidentiality for this study will be ensured by the researcher. It is preferred to use a pseudonym (a fake name) for you, which we will discuss and give you an opportunity to choose, but if you would like to use a random case number for the recording and record of this interview please inform the researcher now. The use of your name as a pseudonym, or using your real name for further publication or presentation of this research will be completely up to you. We will have a discussion about that before we start the interview. You can change your mind about the use of a pseudonym at any time during the interview, and are free to contact me at after the interview.

The risks to you in this study are minimal. The potential risks to you involve recalling possible traumatic experiences from the past. If you feel the need to seek professional assistance for any potential risks two low to no-cost help centers in the Greeley area can provide help. A detailed list of these centers is provided to you with phone numbers and locations. This research also offers some minimal possible benefits of having an opportunity to talk openly about your past and present experiences with homelessness. At any point during the interview that you start to feel uncomfortable or non-willing to continue with the interview you can discontinue the interview and any record of your interview will be erased. If you do decide to stop at any point your decision will be respected and any further help or information needed by you will be provided by the researcher.

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-2161.

____________________________________________________
Subject’s Signature                                           Date

_________________________________________
Researcher’s Signature                                    Date
Consent Form for Homeless Participants

CONSENT FORM FOR HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH
UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Project Title: Researching “hidden-groups”
Researcher: Tyler Kincaid, Department of Applied Statistics and Research Methods
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Research Advisor: Maria Lahman, Ph.D.
Phone: 970-351-1603 E-mail: Maria.Lahman@unco.edu

What?: The purpose of my research is to understand homeless people better. I want to know specifically how homeless people feel about people talking to them, the best ways to approach them, and how they might do so in the most respectful way possible. I want to know the best way a researcher can approach and talk with homeless people. To do this, I want the thoughts, feelings and experiences of homeless people. I think the best people to talk too about homeless issues are the homeless.

How long?: If you agree I will talk to you for 30-60 minutes. I will audio record our conversation. This interview should last somewhere between one half hour and an hour. The interview will be held at a location that is comfortable to you. If not already discussed, we will have a conversation about the location of the interview now. Other than your age, there will be no statistical information asked of you for this study. For the purpose of reviewing the interview with you, an audio recording will be conducted during the interview. At any point during the interview that you would like to stop recording please inform the researcher and your recording will stop. I will respect your decision to record or not record your interview will be respected and honored. Any recording I make will be considered private and respected as such. The voice recordings will be stored for a period of three years on a locked password protected personal computer after which they will be erased. Confidentiality for this study will be ensured by the researcher. It is preferred to use a pseudonym (a fake name) for you, which we will discuss and give you an opportunity to choose, but if you would like to use a number for the recording and record of this interview please inform me now.

Participant initials here

Page 1 of 2
The use of your name as a pseudonym, or using your real name for further publication or presentation of this research will be completely up to you. We will have a discussion about that before we start the interview. You can change your mind about the use of a pseudonym at any time during the interview, and are free to contact me at after the interview.

**I don’t think there is anything in this study that is risky, or are very small:** There might be some potential discomfort about discussing the act of staying hidden as a homeless person and recalling potentially sad or traumatic experiences from your past. If you feel like you want to talk with a professional about any sad or traumatic past experiences discussed in this interview I have a list of from two low to no-cost help centers in the Greeley area. The list of these centers is provided to you with phone numbers and locations. At any point during the interview that you start to feel uncomfortable or non-willing to continue with the interview you can stop the interview and any record of your interview will be erased.

Being in this study is voluntary. Also, your decision to participate in this interview has no effect at all on any social services you might receive now or in the future. This means that I have no affiliation with any homeless shelter or services center, and you talking with me has absolutely no relationship with any services that you might use. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO  80639; 970-351-1910.

☐ I want to use my real name. I’ll write your name here.

___________________________________

☐ I want a fake name. I’ll write the fake name you choose here.

____________________________________________________

Your Signature (participant’s)                        Date

_________________________________________

Researcher’s Signature                                    Date
APPENDIX D
COUNSELING RESOURCE SHEET
COUNSELING RESOURCE SHEET

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO, GREELEY

We appreciate your time and efforts as a participant in our study. We hope that you found your experience as a participant pleasant. However, we acknowledge that some of the questions we asked are of a sensitive nature. Thus, we understand that you may have experienced some psychological discomfort during the study. Please contact the lead researcher, Tyler Kincaid, at 720-987-9901 or tyler.kincaid@unco.edu, if you have any other questions or concerns. Also, below is a list of resources that are available at low or no cost. * Referenced and modified from the University of California, Irvine, retrieved from http://www.research.uci.edu/forms/docs/irb-forms/9_CounselingResourceSheet.doc.

UNCO COUNSELING CENTER Available for: UNCO Students, Faculty, and Staff Location: Cassidy Hall, Second Floor Hours: 8 am to 6 pm, Monday - Thursday 8 am to 5 pm, Friday Closed, Saturday and Sunday Phone: (970) 351-2496 Website: http://www.unco.edu/counseling-center/services.aspx

NORTH RANGE BEHAVIORAL HEALTH EMERGENCY LINE Available for: All Study Participants Location: Walk-In Center at 928 12th Street, Greeley, Colorado (open 24 hours day/7 days a week/ year-round) Phone: (970) 347-2120 Hours: 8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday

ASSAULT SURVIVOR ADVOCACY PROGRAM (ASAP) CONFIDENTIAL RESOURCES Available for: UNCO Students, Faculty, and Staff Location: Cassidy Hall Hours: 8am-5pm, Monday through Friday Phone: (970) 351-1490 24 Hour Hot Line: (970)351-4040 Website: http://www.unco.edu/asap/

ROCKY MOUNTAIN CRISIS PARTNERS Available for: All Study Participants Hours: 24 hours a day, seven days a week Toll-Free: 1 (844) 493-TALK (8255), or Text: “TALK” to 38255, to receive immediate and professional help Website: http://www.metrocrisisservices.org/

NATIONAL ALLIANCE ON MENTAL ILLNESS (NAMI) Available for: All Study Participants Hours: 10am-6pm, Eastern Time, Monday through Friday
Phone: 1 (800) 950-6264
Alternative Phone: 1 (888) 600-4357
Alternative Phone: (949) 646-4357
Website: http://www.nami.org/Find-Support/NAMI-HelpLine

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE
Available for: All Study Participants
Hours: 24 hours a day, seven days a week
Phone: 1 (800) 273-TALK (8255)
Website: http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/default.aspx
APPENDIX E

IRB APPROVAL LETTER
IRB APPROVAL LETTER

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Institutional Review Board

DATE: May 21, 2018

TO: Tyler Kincaid
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1233841-2] Methodological considerations of researching hidden-populations with an emphasis on homeless research sampling methods

SUBMISSION TYPE: Amendment/Modification

ACTION: APPROVED

APPROVAL DATE: May 17, 2018
EXPIRATION DATE: May 17, 2019
REVIEW TYPE: Expedited Review

Thank you for your submission of Amendment/Modification materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB has APPROVED your submission. All research must be conducted in accordance with this approved submission.

This submission has received Expedited Review based on applicable federal regulations.

Please remember that informed consent is a process beginning with a description of the project and insurance of participant understanding. Informed consent must continue throughout the project via a dialogue between the researcher and research participant. Federal regulations require that each participant receives a copy of the consent document.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be approved by this committee prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

All UNANTICIPATED PROBLEMS involving risks to subjects or others and SERIOUS and UNEXPECTED adverse events must be reported promptly to this office.

All NON-COMPLIANCE issues or COMPLAINTS regarding this project must be reported promptly to this office.

Based on the risks, this project requires continuing review by this committee on an annual basis. Please use the appropriate forms for this procedure. Your documentation for continuing review must be received with sufficient time for review and continued approval before the expiration date of May 17, 2019.

Please note that all research records must be retained for a minimum of three years after the completion of the project.

If you have any questions, please contact Sherry May at 970-351-1910 or Sherry.May@unco.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.
Tyler -

Thank you for a clear and thorough IRB application for meaningful and relevant research. The first reviewer, Wendy Highby, and I have both examined your original and revised materials and have recommended approval based on the revisions/amendments/modifications submitted. Be sure to use the revised materials (e.g., consent form) in your participant recruitment and data collection.

Best wishes with your research.

Sincerely,

Dr. Megan Stellino, UNC IRB Co-Chair

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNC) IRB’s records.
APPENDIX F

DATA REPRESENTATION DIAGRAM
DATA REPRESENTATION DIAGRAM

- Thematic
- Critical
- Reflexive
APPENDIX G

RESEARCHER REFLEXIVE GUIDE
RESEARCHER REFLEXIVE GUIDE

Methodological Questions Researchers Should Consider Before Sampling Homeless Populations

Please take the time to ask yourself these questions:
- How will you manage situations with people experiencing mental illness?
- How will you manage situations with people experiencing substance use?
- How will you manage situations with people who have experienced physical trauma?
- How will you manage situations with people who have experienced sexual trauma?
- How will you manage situations with people who have experienced emotional trauma?

Considerations to Make:

Sample will be Diverse
- It is not always ethical to assume that your population needs your help, or that they want your help. What is your predisposition to the population?
- It is not ethical to assume your sample participant is experiencing homelessness. What are your definitions of homelessness?
- How will you ask someone if they are currently experiencing homelessness?
- You might need help with people, situations, or interactions—do you have resources ready before you start your research?

Reflexivity Matters
- Adding context to your sampling process through a reflective analysis of your decisions can aid the reliability and validity of your research. How might this be represented in research reports so readers can benefit from this information?
- What steps are you taking to examine your impact on the research?
- How does your reflexive analysis change your perception of your work?
APPENDIX H

PERSONS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS RESEARCH GUIDE
Are You a Person Experiencing Homelessness That Has Been Asked to Participate In Research?

What You Should Know
- Don’t be afraid to ask lots of questions.
- You never need to be part of research.
- You can leave a research study at any time.
- Your experience is your expertise.
- Your time and information is worth compensation.
- Some Words used in Research Mean Different Things.
  - Example: being an Informant for finding other people to participate in research is not being a snitch or telling on them. Ask the researcher about any confusing words. Make sure you get an answer that works for you.

Questions You Should Ask
- How will I be compensated for my time and expertise?
- How will I be able to benefit from this research? Is there something I benefit from today?
- What do they want? What are the motives of the researcher?
- Who can I talk to about my experience other than the researcher?