

ESCAPE AND APATHY: HOW NARRATIVES OF HOMELESSNESS INFLUENCE
BENEVOLENT BEHAVIORS AMONG DOMICILE PUBLICS

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Escape and apathy: How narratives of homelessness influence benevolent behaviors among domicile publics

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ABSTRACT

Using the theoretical lenses of attribution theory, contact hypothesis, and exemplification theory, this study examined how narratives of homelessness influenced domicile individuals when determining benevolent behaviors. Survey data were collected from 331 participants regarding the influence of particular narratives on the likelihood and types of assistance participants would be willing to provide homeless individuals. Participants also responded to two open-ended questions to identify other factors likely to influence the offering of assistance. Findings revealed that participants considered 12 factors when choosing whether or not to act benevolently, including cause, vulnerability of the homeless individual, and willingness to escape homelessness most commonly mentioned. The findings also suggested that domicile individuals divided the homeless population into categories (e.g., deserving and undeserving) based upon narratives to decide whether or not to act benevolently. The practical applications of these findings stress the importance of accurate representations of homelessness from narrative sources including media outlets.

Keywords: narrative, attribution, exemplification theory, contact hypothesis, homelessness, benevolence.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	iv
1. INTRODUCTION	1
1.1. Statement of Problem.....	2
1.2. Purpose and Potential Significance of Current Study.....	3
1.3. Definition of Key Terms.....	3
1.3.1. Narratives of Homelessness.....	3
1.3.2. Benevolence.....	5
1.3.3. Homelessness.....	5
1.3.4. Domicile Individuals.....	6
1.4. Organizational Design	7
2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE	8
2.1. Homelessness.....	8
2.1.1. Demographics of Homelessness	8
2.1.2. Duration of Homelessness	10
2.1.3. Problems Associated with Homelessness	10
2.1.4. Causes of Homelessness	11
2.1.5. Homelessness Studied from the Communication Perspective.....	12
2.2. Narrative	13
2.2.1. Narrative Paradigm	13
2.2.2. Persuasive Nature of Narratives.....	13
2.2.3. Attribution and Exemplification Theory.....	15
2.3. Benevolence.....	16
2.3.1. Responses to Homelessness.....	17

2.4.	Conclusion	20
3.	METHODS	21
3.1.	Research Design.....	21
3.1.1.	Demographic Survey	22
3.1.2.	Narratives.....	22
3.1.3.	Survey Design.....	25
3.1.4.	Open-ended Questions.....	25
3.2.	Participants.....	26
3.2.1.	Demographics	26
3.3.	Data Collection	27
3.4.	Data Analysis	28
3.4.1.	Quantitative Analysis.....	28
3.4.2.	Qualitative Analysis.....	28
3.5.	Conclusion	30
4.	RESULTS AND DISCUSSION.....	31
4.1.	Results.....	31
4.1.1.	Quantitative Results.....	31
4.1.2.	Qualitative Results.....	33
4.2.	Discussion.....	39
4.3.	Conclusion	41
5.	IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH.....	42
5.1.	Implications.....	46
5.2.	Limitations	47
5.3.	Directions for Future Research	48
5.4.	Conclusion	50

REFERENCES	52
APPENDIX A. DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY	63
APPENDIX B. NARRATIVES.....	66
APPENDIX C. SURVEY QUESTIONS.....	67
APPENDIX D. CODEBOOK.....	68

1. INTRODUCTION

On a given night in January 2014, 578,424 people were counted as homeless (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), 2014). According to the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (2015), every year a staggering 2.5 to 3.5 million individuals experience homelessness. A familiar social issue, homelessness is an important issue of our time. Much of the interaction domicile individuals have with homeless individuals is with the most visible members of the homeless population, primarily panhandlers (Novak & Harter, 2008; Snow & Mulcahy, 2001). When panhandled, over 61% of individuals report giving at least occasionally (Lee & Farrell, 2003). However, the way domicile individuals select which homeless individuals to give to and which to pass by is unclear.

One factor that may play a role in the decisions made by domicile individuals to assist homeless individuals is the communication an individual receives about homelessness and from homeless individuals. Communication has been defined by a variety of scholars in different ways, but this study will work under the definition that communication is a dynamic process encompassing both verbal and nonverbal messages that are generated by a sender and responded to by a receiver (Goyer, 1970; Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953; Ruesch & Bateson, 1951). The context of homelessness provides an opportunity to explore how communication influences an individual's response to people who are experiencing homelessness. This study will examine how individuals make decisions about giving to the homeless by considering the role that narratives of homelessness, specifically causes of homelessness, play in determining benevolent behaviors.

1.1. Statement of Problem

Homeless populations have become increasingly visible, making the issue “one of the country’s most pressing social problems” (Harter, Berquist, Titsworth, Novak, & Brokaw, 2005, p. 321; Snow & Mulcahy, 2001). Between 2013 and 2014, the United States saw an overall increase in homelessness of 1.2% (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2014). Growing rates of homelessness extend from a host of issues including “home foreclosure, limited employment opportunities, shrinking budgets for public assistance, [and] lack of affordable health care” (Shamblin, Williams, & Bellaw, 2012, p. 3).

While recent years have seen an increase in public attention toward homelessness, the subject is far from being a new phenomenon. Homelessness has been well documented for over 2,000 years through a wide variety of formats and texts. Literature (e.g., poems, traveler’s tales, ballads, and pieces authored by homeless individuals), government and legal documents (e.g., government and organizational policy, declarations, laws, and social welfare surveys), sacred texts, and academic research have all recorded information about homelessness in the historical context (Documentary History of Homelessness, 2004).

Domicile individuals appear to have a fairly accurate understanding of the causes of homelessness and acknowledge that a variety of factors, both individualistic and structural, lead to homelessness (Buck, Toro, & Ramos, 2004). While much of the public seems to grasp the root of homelessness, common stereotypes (e.g., laziness, substance abuse, and immorality) are still prominent among domicile individuals (Boydell & Goering, 2000; Knecht & Martinez, 2009; Lee, Jones, & Lewis, 1990). Several studies have examined how and why domicile individuals choose to give assistance to homeless populations (Hodgetts, Stolte, Waimarie Nikora, & Groot, 2012; Lee & Farrell, 2003; Lee, Farrell, & Link, 2004; Schneider, & Remillard, 2013), and what

the public perceives to be the cause of homelessness (Knecht & Martinez, 2009; Lee et al., 1990). However, the way these two factors interact has not been well documented.

1.2. Purpose and Potential Significance of Current Study

Though homelessness is generally recognized as a serious social problem, discourse on the issue does not always portray homelessness as a problem that society as a whole is responsible for solving (Best, 2010). Individual efforts to improve society can make a meaningful impact over time, building momentum and possibly influencing national campaigns and policymakers (United Nations Volunteers, 2011). Bernard Williams (1985) asserts that individual contributions are so important that “[t]here is no limit to what a given person might be doing to improve the world, except the limits of time and strength” (p. 86). The scope of services available to assist homeless individuals is shaped by the domicile public’s understanding and opinion of homelessness (Hodgetts et al., 2012; Song, 2006; Toro & McDonell, 1992).

Researchers agree that long-term changes in both social attitudes and actions are required to eliminate homelessness (Giamo, 1992; Morgan, Goddard, & Givens, 1997). This study will examine how narratives of homelessness influence the willingness of domicile individuals to assist homeless individuals. Understanding the benevolent behaviors of domicile individuals is an important step toward making the societal changes necessary to eliminate homelessness.

1.3. Definition of Key Terms

1.3.1. Narratives of Homelessness

The present study will use the framework of Fisher’s (1984) narrative paradigm to understand how domicile individuals choose which homeless individuals are worthy of receiving assistance. “Narratives enable us to understand the actions of others” because each of us lives and understands life as a story (Fisher, 1987, p. 66). Stories are judged based upon narrative

fidelity (i.e., believability) and probability (i.e., consistency with past experiences) (Fisher, 1984; 1987; 1989). Strong narrative fidelity and probability make a story more meaningful because these traits allow individuals to “make the personal link between the images or values displayed” by the storyteller (Burns, 2015, p. 101). The narratives used for this study will encompass the causes of homelessness and encompass both structural and individualistic causes.

1.3.1.1. Structural causes of homelessness. Individuals who are homeless due to structural factors are influenced by “circumstances largely beyond their control” (Wilson, 1991, p. 14). Structural causes of homelessness are primarily societal factors including lack of affordable housing, sudden economic downturn, and inadequate schools (Lee et al., 1990; Papa, Papa, Kandath, Worrell, & Muthuswamy, 2005; Wolch, Dear, & Akita, 1988). For purposes of this study, structural causes of homelessness will also include any factor that causes an individual experiencing homelessness to be viewed as a victim of circumstance such as loss of employment, abusive or neglectful childhood, loss of a loved one, and physical and mental illnesses that cannot be prevented by the individual.

1.3.1.2. Individualistic causes of homelessness. Individualistic causes of homelessness hold the individual personally responsible for their circumstance. Causes that are considered individualistic include individual deficits such as lack of effort and laziness, addiction, and untreated and preventable physical or mental illness (Hinton & Cassel, 2013; Schneider, Chamberlain, & Hodgetts, 2010; Toro & Janisse, 2004). Individuals who become homeless largely because of individualistic causes may be viewed as having become homeless through self-infliction.

1.3.2. Benevolence

John P. Reeder, Jr. (1998) distinguishes benevolence from empathy and sympathy and asserts that empathy recognizes suffering in another individual, sympathy shows aversion for another's suffering, and benevolence "desires the alleviation of [another person's] suffering" (p. 49). Furthermore, Merriam-Webster online (n.d.) defines benevolence as a "disposition to do good" or "an act of kindness [or] a generous gift." For this study, benevolence is defined as an act toward a homeless individual with the intent to alleviate or alter the individual's suffering. These acts may be manifested in a variety of ways including monetary, material, physical, or emotional support.

1.3.3. Homelessness

Definitions of homelessness vary greatly. Building a precise definition of homelessness is difficult because groups such as policymakers, researchers, and advocates use different definitions to meet their specific needs. Furthermore, it is unclear how the quality of housing and period of time spent homeless influence the classification of an individual (Toro & Janisse, 2004). Given the complexities of homelessness, it may be best to consider homelessness as a continuum with many degrees and variations. This continuum extends between individuals who are sheltered and those who are unsheltered (Takahashi, 1996; Toro & Janisse, 2004; Wolch et al., 1988). The sheltered homeless population includes individuals who are staying in inadequate housing, including "emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, or safe havens" (HUD, 2014, p. 2). Those on the unsheltered homeless side of the continuum include individuals who are experiencing literal homelessness (Toro & Janisse, 2004). Individuals who are unsheltered primarily stay in areas not designated for long-term human habitation such as a "car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground" (HUD, 2014, p. 2).

This study will use the definition of homelessness outlined by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act of 1987. The McKinney Act defines homelessness as:

(1) an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and (2) an individual who has a primary nighttime residence that is: (a) a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill); (b) an institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or (c) a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. (Sect. 103)

An exception to this is populations where “movement from place to place is part” of a cultural practice; therefore, this definition does not include cultures with nomadic behaviors (Toro & Janisse, 2004, p. 241).

1.3.4. Domicile Individuals

Domicile individuals are the counterparts to individuals experiencing homelessness. Black’s Law Dictionary (1991) defines domicile as an individual’s “true, fixed, and permanent home” (p. 337). In order for the residence to be considered a domicile, the individual must have the intent to return to that place even when absent for a period of time (US Legal Definitions, n.d.). For the purposes of this study, a domicile individual includes any person who inhabits a stable, permanent residence with the intent to remain at that residence.

Homelessness is a prominent issue in society (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2015; HUD, 2014; Harter et al., 2005). Society as a whole is responsible for finding solutions to reduce homelessness. With this in mind, the current study will use the perceptions of adults who are domicile to better understand benevolent interactions with homeless individuals.

1.4. Organizational Design

Chapter One offered the focus and rationale prompting the current study and defined the terms used for this study. The following chapters include the remainder of the study. Chapter Two will review the existing body of literature regarding homelessness, narrative, and benevolence. Chapter Three outlines the methods used to collect and analyze data, which is followed by the results and discussion in Chapter Four. Chapter Five highlights the implications and considers the limitations of this study, provides future directions for research, and offers a conclusion to the current study.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Homelessness is a social issue that has been studied through a variety of lenses and within several academic disciplines. The framework this study uses to understand homelessness is Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm. Narratives have been used to examine media framing of homelessness (Schneider et al., 2010), and to understand the effects of displacement on mental health (Berman, Mulcahy, Forchuk, Edmunds, Haldenby, & Lopez, 2009) and health equality among homeless populations (Patterson, Markey, & Somers, 2012). No known studies have used the narratives of homelessness to understand benevolent behaviors (or lack thereof) of domicile publics toward homeless populations. The following chapter presents the body of literature relevant to this study concerning homelessness, narratives, and benevolence.

2.1. Homelessness

Between 2.5 and 3.5 million Americans experience homelessness each year (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2015). A point-in-time estimate taken by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2014) found that on a given night in January, 578,424 people were homeless. Current estimates indicate that there are 84,291 individuals who have been "continuously homeless for a year or more or have experienced at least four episodes of homelessness in the last three years" in the United States (HUD, 2014, p. 2).

2.1.1. Demographics of Homelessness

The United States's homeless population includes many diverse individuals. While single men compose a group of homeless individuals who are highly visible, people of all categories are found among the homeless (Harter et al., 2005; Toro & Janisse, 2004). Homelessness affects populations not frequently associated with the issue including families, children and adolescents, young adults, the elderly, individuals who are currently employed, and individuals with various

education levels (Takahashi, 1996; U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2014; Wolch et al., 1988). In fact, homeless families accounted for 37% of the homeless individuals in January 2014; during the same point-in-time estimate, 45,205 individuals were “unaccompanied homeless children and youth” (HUD, 2014, p. 33).

Still, certain populations are at a greater risk for homelessness, such as American veterans who “form a disproportionate percentage of the homeless population in the United States” (Cretzmeyer, Moeckli, & Liu, 2014, p. 699). American veterans account for 8.6% of the homeless population, and about 10% of homeless veterans are women (HUD, 2014). Racial minorities and individuals with mental illness are also at greater risk for becoming homeless (Takahashi, 1996; Wolch et al., 1988).

America’s homeless populations are heavily concentrated in metropolitan areas. Approximately 90% of homeless individuals reside in urban neighborhoods with Tampa, New Orleans, Fresno, and Las Vegas experiencing some of the highest rates of homelessness in the United States (Lee, Price-Spratlen, & Kanan, 2003; Sermons & Witte, 2011; Rosenheck, Bassuk, & Salomon, 1999). Within urban areas, there are three primary accommodation types where homeless populations stay. These accommodation types include the streets, homeless shelters, and temporary housing. It is not uncommon for individuals to stay in a variety of accommodation types and areas on a daily basis. About 47% of the individuals surveyed by Burt, Aron, Douglas, Valente, Lee, and Iwen (1999) stayed solely on the street, in shelters, or in temporary housing, with those staying only in shelters being the dominant group (34%). Over half of homeless individuals likely stay at some combination of accommodation during a typical week (Burt et al., 1999).

Individuals who experience homelessness are among the most disadvantaged populations “whose material conditions remain inextricably linked with work (or lack thereof)” (Novak & Harter, 2008, p. 399). Many domicile individuals believe homeless people do not work; however, about 40% of homeless individuals hold part-time or full-time jobs but cannot afford housing (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2015). Though a portion of the homeless population works, most homeless individuals do not hold roles that are “defined in the terms of positive social utility and moral worth” (Snow & Anderson, 1987, p. 1339). Panhandlers violate the standard of American work ethic and what is considered an acceptable form of earning money; this further complicates public opinions of homelessness (Lee & Farrell, 2003).

2.1.2. Duration of Homelessness

Most individuals who report being homeless during their lifetime indicate that episodes of homelessness are usually brief. Individuals who experience homelessness for less than one month account for 40% of the homeless population, and only 10% of individuals who have experienced homelessness report a duration of more than one year (Link, Susser, Stueve, Phelan, Moore, & Struening, 1995b). Single adults who are homeless commonly have histories of prior homelessness and experience periods of homelessness that are longer than other groups of homeless individuals (Toro & Janisse, 2004).

2.1.3. Problems Associated with Homelessness

Homeless individuals are often captured in a “cycle of deteriorating circumstances... that affects their mental, social, and physical wellbeing” (Wolch et al., 1988, p. 447). Issues such as substance abuse and mental health issues may surface after an individual becomes homeless even if they have not experienced these issues prior to an episode of homelessness (Patterson & Tweed, 2009; Wolch et al., 1988). These issues make the escape from homelessness more

difficult. One potential cause of issues surfacing during an episode of homelessness is the loss of dignity felt by some homeless individuals after being cast aside by domicile individuals.

Participants for Miller and Key's 2001 study indicated deep depression and suicidal thoughts related to feelings of invisibility and worthlessness. Among homeless families, substance abuse and violence are closely associated with both the cause of homeless episodes and the inability to escape homelessness (Hinton & Cassel, 2013).

2.1.4. Causes of Homelessness

Most individuals do not experience homelessness as a sudden event; rather, homelessness typically occurs through a variety of structural factors and/or individualistic causes (Schneider et al., 2010; Wolch et al., 1988). Factors commonly considered to be structural include: lack of affordable housing, rapid decline in the economy, deinstitutionalization, poor upbringing (e.g., abuse or neglect during childhood and parental abandonment), and shortage of jobs (Burt et al., 1999; Hinton & Cassel, 2013; Papa et al., 2005; Toro & Janisse, 2004; Wilson, 1991; Wolch et al., 1988). Frequently, factors such as substance abuse and other addictions, pregnancy at a young age, lack of financial responsibility, and inability or laziness are associated with individualistic causes of homelessness (Hinton & Cassel, 2013; Lee et al., 1990; Toro & Janisse, 2004; Wilson, 1991). Some causes of homelessness may be perceived as both structural and individualistic depending on the specific situation. Such causes include loss of job or welfare assistance, physical and mental illness, poor education, eviction from residence, and inability to care for one's self (Link et al., 1995b; Papa et al., 2005; Schneider & Remillard, 2013; Wilson, 1991; Wolch et al., 1988).

While several researchers (Papa et al., 2005; Schneider et al., 2010; Schneider & Remillard, 2013; Wolch et al., 1988) indicate that a combination of causes (both structural and

individualistic) leads to an individual becoming homeless, a vast majority of domicile publics perceive that individualistic causes of homelessness play a larger role in an individual becoming homeless (Furnham, 1996; Lee et al., 1990; Schneider et al., 2010; Schneider & Remillard, 2013). In reality, the leading causes of homelessness are primarily structural: insufficient income and lack of affordable housing (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2015).

2.1.5. Homelessness Studied from the Communication Perspective

Communication research has been actively involved in understanding homelessness. The largest area of communication research about homelessness includes media studies. How the media portrays homelessness and homeless individuals are well documented (Best, 2010; Buck et al., 2004; Forte, 2002; Hodgetts, et al., 2005; Richter et al., 2011; Zufferey, 2013). Schneider (2014) compares media representations of homelessness to the ways domicile publics discuss homelessness. Media has also been evaluated in the context of social activism of homelessness (Middleton, 2014; Novak & Harter, 2008).

Beyond media studies, individuals have been studied to understand the relationship between domicile publics and homeless individuals. Papa et al. (2005) used interpersonal contact to “promote social justice through communication” (p. 242). Attitude changes of domicile individuals after exposure to homeless individuals (Knecht & Martinez, 2009) and the domicile publics’ construction of identities as individuals who care about homelessness (Schneider & Remillard, 2013) are also areas where communication researchers have been active. No known research is available on the influence narratives of homelessness have on domicile individuals’ benevolent behaviors toward homeless individuals.

2.2. Narrative

One way domicile publics gain information about homelessness is through narratives. Narratives may be received through interpersonal or mediated contact. By examining narratives of homelessness, one can understand attributions of homelessness including stereotypes commonly held by domicile publics. Being aware of these attributions may lead to an understanding of how narratives of homelessness influence perceptions of benevolence among domicile publics.

2.2.1. Narrative Paradigm

Under the narrative paradigm, human communication is viewed as a series of stories that “give order to human experience” regardless of culture, history, or setting (Fisher, 1984, p. 6; 1987; 1989). Scholes and Kellogg (1966) assert that both a story and storyteller are required to create a narrative. The individual is the storyteller and his or her life is the story. Viewed on a larger scale, each person is not only the teller of his or her own story, but is also part of a greater narrative that includes the stories of people from the past, present, and future (Burke, 1968).

2.2.2. Persuasive Nature of Narratives

The narratives told through the lives of others have the potential to impact our lives in a powerful way. Understanding the story of a stranger helps an individual to “recognize the stranger as one who suffers, who is unlike but also like our near and dear” self (Hallisey & Hansen, 1996; Reeder Jr., 1998, p. 57). The ability of an individual to see his or herself in a story through connection with characters and settings is also an important component of how persuasive a narrative is (Slater & Rouner, 2002). Likewise, when narratives are found to be congruent with an individual’s own goals and experiences, they are more likely to engage with the story and be persuaded by the narrative’s message (Vaughn, Hesse, Petkova, & Trudeau,

2009). How an individual receives the narrative of a homeless individual (e.g., through meaningful interactions with homeless individuals versus media portrayals of homelessness) may have an impact on the individual's ability to connect with the story.

2.2.2.1. Contact hypothesis. Historically, homeless individuals were not visible to the general public due to laws restricting vagrant behaviors and higher rates of institutionalization for individuals with mental illness (Harter et al., 2005; Hombs, 1990). Hombs states that one of the most distinguishable characteristics of the United States's homeless population is how highly visible homeless individuals are in our modern society. Increased visibility of homeless populations in recent decades provides more opportunities for domicile individuals to interact with homeless individuals.

Exposure to homeless populations influences the way domicile individuals perceive causes of homelessness. Individuals who have increased contact with homeless individuals tend to cite structural inequalities as the cause of homelessness more frequently than individualistic causes (Lee et al., 2004). Studies have shown that extended contact with minority populations, including homeless individuals, assists individuals in relating to the group, erodes stereotypes, and increases compassion toward the population (Knecht & Martinez, 2009; Lee et al., 2004; Schneider & Remillard, 2013). Thus, positive attitudes toward homeless individuals increase along with the willingness to support rights of homeless individuals (Lee et al., 2004).

However, the opposite is also true. The most visible members of the homeless community, largely panhandlers and individuals who stay on the streets, often shape the attitudes held by the general public and may contribute to preexisting stereotypes (Novak & Harter, 2008; Snow & Mulcahy, 2001). Likewise, if there is no direct contact with homeless populations, the

media becomes the primary storyteller of homeless narratives for domicile publics (Schneider et al., 2010).

2.2.2.2. Mediated contact. While many media portrayals of homelessness include narratives of specific homeless individuals, the original storytellers (i.e., the homeless individuals themselves) are frequently removed from their story. This occurs to provide journalists with the opportunity to “tap into the ongoing narrative to present aspects of the story that they think the public will expect to read” (Hodgetts, Cullen, & Radley, 2005; Schneider, 2010, pp. 166-67). By excluding homeless individuals from the telling of their narratives, they are also removed from the formation of solutions to the issues facing homeless populations (Iyengar, 1991).

Furthermore, media portrayals of homelessness tend to place more weight on individualistic causes of homelessness than structural causes. Fifty-seven percent of the nationally syndicated comic strips analyzed by Penner and Penner (1994) placed blame on homeless individuals for their circumstances. Similarly, news coverage typically focuses on individualistic causes of homelessness (Buck et al., 2004; Hodgetts et al., 2005; Schneider, 2010). Ruddick (1996) suggests that how homelessness is represented in the media not only defines the way domicile publics understand homelessness but also influences the way domicile publics interact with and treat homeless individuals.

2.2.3. Attribution and Exemplification Theory

Many stereotypes are associated with homeless individuals. Popular culture perpetuates stereotypes through portrayals of homeless individuals as immoral, heavy drinkers or drug users, or lazy (Lee et al., 1990). Most negative media coverage focuses on individualistic factors of homelessness such as addiction and squatting (Schneider et al., 2010). Beyond media coverage,

homeless individuals who occupy areas seen as dirty, including sidewalks, public restrooms, and run-down buildings, are frequently viewed as defiled and dirty themselves by domicile individuals (Hodgetts et al., 2008; 2012). Mental illness, disaffiliation, disempowerment, and passivity are also commonly associated with homeless individuals (Cohen & Wagner, 1992; Knecht & Martinez, 2009; Link et al., 1995a).

Because many domicile individuals do not have extended meaningful contact with homeless individuals, they are forced to take cognitive shortcuts to judge interactions with homeless individuals (Zillman, Gibson, Sundar, & Perkins, 1996). Media portrayals of homelessness and highly visible members of the homeless population are the sources where domicile publics most likely receive information about homelessness. Exemplification theory suggests these experiences ultimately become exemplars (i.e., typical examples) and are used to make decisions about other similar individuals or situations (Zillman, 1999).

Negative exemplars may lead individuals to attribute the situations of those who are unable to maintain a residence to their own personal choices or even as punishment for a moral failing. Lerner & Miller (1978) propose that “individuals have a need to believe that they live in a world where people generally get what they deserve” (p. 1030). Any negative attitudes toward homelessness may be reinforced by an attribution error, believing that an individual is personally responsible for becoming homeless rather than considering various structural causes of homelessness that might be in play. Ultimately, these negative attitudes toward homelessness may influence an individual’s willingness to provide assistance to a homeless individual.

2.3. Benevolence

Benevolence is closely linked to the narratives told by others. Reeder Jr. (1998) argues that true benevolence “manifests a concern for others that is equal in degree to concern for self”

(p. 48). This level of concern may be created through a strong connection with another individual's narrative. One way people define themselves as caring about homelessness is by expressing similarity between homeless individuals and one's self (Schneider & Remillard, 2013). The expression of similarity by domicile individuals can be explained by the persuasive nature of narratives. The capability of narratives to persuade depends on how able an individual is to visualize themselves in the place of the other person (Slater & Rouner, 2002). If a person is easily able to visualize himself or herself in the situation of the homeless individual, they may express higher levels of similarity between themselves and the homeless individual.

It is important to note that benevolence is set aside from empathy and sympathy. While empathy recognizes that another person is suffering and sympathy displays aversion for the suffering of another person, benevolence moves beyond aversion; the desire to alleviate or eliminate the suffering of another person is benevolence (Reeder Jr., 1988). Empathy, sympathy, and benevolence are not a progression of emotions. One does not necessarily lead to the others. For instance, an individual may recognize the situation of a homeless individual, but feeling that the person "deserves" to be homeless due to the events leading to the individual's inability to maintain a proper residence. This feeling without concern demonstrates empathy; however, unless the individual's perspective of the situation or worldview changes, they are unlikely to feel sympathy or benevolence for the homeless person.

2.3.1. Responses to Homelessness

Overall, research indicates that domicile individuals want to help individuals who are experiencing homelessness (Link et al., 1995a; Lee & Farrell, 2003; Morgan et al., 1997). In fact, 60% of study participants reported giving at least periodically when solicited for money on the street (Lee & Farrell, 2003). Supporting an increase in taxes to fund programs that assist

homelessness is also common among domicile publics (Lee et al., 1990; Link et al., 1995a; Toro & McDonell, 1992). When asked about their willingness to assist the homeless, 45% of study participants reported helping by donating their time (Morgan et al., 1997). Only 23% of study participants reported they had never given time or money to a homeless individual or organization that works with homeless populations, further supporting the domicile individuals' commitment to assisting the homeless (Morgan et al., 1997).

Still, not all domicile individuals react positively to homeless individuals. While many domicile individuals are willing to help homeless individuals, they also apply qualifying statements when describing benevolent behaviors and describe homelessness through negative stereotyping (Link et al., 1995a; Schneider & Remillard, 2013). Homeless populations describe situations of being dehumanized and avoided by domicile individuals (Hodgetts et al., 2012). Beyond avoidance, some domicile individuals choose to use verbal or physical harassment to interact with homeless individuals (Lankenau, 1999). Further, public places are increasingly becoming off limits to homeless individuals. This exclusion is exhibited through the use of “security guards to remove homeless people from shopping districts and public libraries” (Hodgetts, Stolte, Chamberlain, Radley, Nikora, Nabalarua, & Groot, 2008, p. 933). More recently, spikes similar to those used to deter birds from nesting on buildings have been installed in public areas where homeless individuals spend time (Andreou, 2014), and backs of park benches have been removed to discourage individuals from loitering in high-traffic areas of some downtown settings (Tran, 2015).

When an attempt to assist a homeless individual is made and the attempt does not yield the expected response, individuals typically attribute the failure to the homeless individual rather than recognizing potential deficiencies in the benevolent act (Schneider & Remillard, 2013).

Schneider and Remillard suggest that when domicile individuals use qualifying statements about their attempts (e.g., I tried to give them food, but they only wanted money to buy alcohol) to assist homeless individuals, it perpetuates the common stereotype that it is the homeless individual's fault that he or she is experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, identifying individuals who may not be willing or able to accept assistance indicates that some homeless individuals are more worthy of receiving assistance than others. Ultimately, the response to homelessness appears to hinge on an individual's perception of whether an individual is among the deserving poor (i.e., worthy of assistance) or the undeserving poor (i.e., unworthy of assistance) (Hodgetts et al., 2012; Song, 2006; Takahashi, 1996).

2.3.1.1. Deserving and undeserving poor. Historically, the separation between the honest poor and dishonest poor is long-standing, illustrating a difference between “those who suffer poverty as a submission to God and those that are poor as punishment for moral failing” (Schneider & Remillard, 2013, p. 98; Pimpare, 2008). Hodgetts et al. (2012) consider the dichotomy between “drifters” (i.e., individuals who became homeless as a result of poor life choices) and “droppers” (i.e., those who have become homeless due to an unexpected and traumatic event in their life). Typically, drifters tend to move between lower class and homelessness while droppers experience shorter episodes of homelessness and are able to reintegrate into society after obtaining stable housing.

Regardless of the terms used to describe groups of homeless individuals, one concept remains the same: some individuals are victims of circumstances beyond their control (i.e., structural causes of homelessness) and others suffer from self-imposed situations (i.e., individualistic causes of homelessness). The recognition of deserving and undeserving poor may be an important component in the willingness of domicile individuals to act benevolently toward

homeless individuals (Pellegrini, Queirolo, Minarrex, & Valenzuela, 1997; Feldman, 2006; Schneider & Remillard, 2013). It is with this consideration in mind that the following hypothesis was created:

H: People will be more likely to act benevolently toward the homeless in terms of a) money, b) food, c) material items, d) resources, e) transportation, and f) housing when they perceive structural causes compared to individual causes in narratives.

To understand how the narratives of homelessness influence an individual's willingness to act benevolently, the following research question is asked:

RQ: What factors in narratives of homelessness influence an individual's decision to act benevolently toward homeless individuals?

2.4. Conclusion

This chapter discussed several aspects of homelessness including demographics of the homeless population, typical duration of homelessness, problems associated with homelessness, causes of homelessness, and how homelessness has been studied from a communication perspective. Literature regarding the narrative paradigm, the persuasive nature of narratives, contact hypothesis, and attribution of homeless stereotypes was also presented. Finally, this chapter discussed benevolence, what is known about the domicile public's responses to homelessness, and the concept of the deserving and undeserving poor. The next chapter will outline the methods used to test the hypothesis and answer the research question.

3. METHODS

Survey questions and quantitative analysis were used in testing the hypothesis: “People will be more likely to act benevolently toward the homeless in terms of a) money, b) food, c) material items, d) resources, e) transportation, and f) housing when they perceive structural causes compared to individual causes in narratives.” Open-ended qualitative questions and thematic analysis were used to answer the research question: “What factors in narratives of homelessness influence an individual’s decision to act benevolently toward homeless individuals?” This chapter describes in further detail the methods used to collect the data for this study.

3.1. Research Design

Narratives, a survey, and open-ended questions were used to prove the hypothesis and answer the research question. Given that narratives offer “order to human experience” (Fisher, 1984, p. 6; 1987; 1989), stories of homeless individuals were used with the intent that participants would be able to make sense of their perceptions about homelessness, even if they did not have any personal experience with the homeless population. Narratives were constructed in order to give participants a specific scenario to consider when filling out the survey. Likert-type questions were used to measure how likely participants are to provide various forms of assistance to the person they read about in the narrative. The present study also used two open-ended questions to gain insight into the factors that influence an individual’s willingness to act benevolently toward homeless individuals. All materials used for this study were reviewed and approved by the thesis committee and the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) prior to distribution.

3.1.1. Demographic Survey

A demographic survey (Appendix A) was created to gather information about participants for this study. The survey consisted of questions that previous research (Lee et al., 1990; Lee & Farrell, 2003; Morgan et al., 1997; Toro & McDonell, 1992) identified as being indicators of a willingness to help others (e.g., level of education, political affiliation, and religious views). Additional questions were added to account for increased compassion due to previous exposure to homeless populations (i.e., contact hypothesis). Questions identifying the contact hypothesis included the total population of the participant's current city and if the participant or an immediate family member of the participant has ever experienced homelessness. Finally, basic demographic questions (e.g., sex, ethnicity, age) were included to gain general knowledge about the participants.

3.1.2. Narratives

Three narratives depicting homeless individuals were constructed for this study (Appendix B). The neutral narrative does not provide any information about how the individual in the narrative became homeless; this narrative describes an individual who is currently homeless, but no additional details are given about the individual's situation leading up to the time he or she is being described. On the other hand, the internal narrative and external narrative provide more detail indicating the cause of homelessness for each individual. The external narrative portrays an individual who has become homeless because of factors outside of his or her control. The individual in the internal narrative is portrayed to have made a series of bad decisions; these decisions not only led to his or her homelessness but also caused him or her to remain homeless.

3.1.2.1. Constructing narratives for the present study. Stories that are coherent (i.e., have high narrative probability) and congruent with the listener's past experiences (i.e., have high narrative fidelity) are judged as more believable. Even if individuals are not familiar with the concepts of narrative probability and fidelity, they may still assess whether or not a story makes sense. With this in mind, narratives were developed to meet the criteria of narrative probability and fidelity (Fisher, 1984; 1987; 1989). Furthermore, homelessness is stereotypically seen as an issue that affects middle-aged men (Harter et al., 2005; Toro & Janisse, 2004); therefore, narratives were intentionally created without indicating the age or sex of the homeless individual to reduce possible bias for participants to answer the question in a particular way.

3.1.2.1.1. *Neutral narrative.* The neutral narrative tells a story of a homeless individual with little detail. No cause of the individual's homelessness is cited in the story. The neutral narrative states:

An individual became homeless six months ago. This individual lives in an urban area and typically spends the night in homeless shelters. If the weather is nice, this individual will camp outside on the street overnight. This individual carries a backpack of belongings and has been seen asking for assistance in the area where s/he lives.

This narrative was constructed from previous research about the typical duration of homelessness (Link et al., 1995b; Toro & Janisse, 2004). Demographic information of homeless individuals in the United States was also taken into account when constructing the neutral narrative (Burt et al., 1999; Lee et. al, 2003). The neutral narrative was created to be consistent with how an individual might describe a homeless individual he or she saw but did not interact with to strengthen narrative probability and fidelity.

3.1.2.1.2. External narrative. The intent of the external narrative was to provide a “positive” independent variable. This narrative describes an individual who has become homeless due to conditions that are outside his or her control. The external narrative says:

An individual suffered a devastating accident resulting in the loss of vision. Unable to see, the individual asked a trusted neighbor to mail rent money to the landlord. Instead of mailing the money, the neighbor pocketed the rent money. Because the individual did not pay rent, s/he was evicted, resulting in this individual becoming homeless. Since the accident, this individual has been unable to find employment.

The external narrative was an adapted account from a news story (Jesser Smith, 2015). Details that indicated the homeless individual’s sex and profession were removed to reduce potential bias. Narrative probability and fidelity were achieved because this story is a retelling of a real person’s struggle with homelessness.

3.1.2.1.3. Internal narrative. In contrast to the external narrative, the internal narrative serves as a “negative” independent variable. This final narrative describes an individual who became homeless due to a variety of individualistic causes. The internal narrative says:

An individual first experienced homelessness as a young adult. After struggling with work, s/he turned to drugs and alcohol to escape the increasingly difficult situation. Because of addiction, this individual was fired and became unable to find stable employment. S/he has been arrested several times, refuses rehabilitation services, and no longer seeks employment.

Research (Boydell et al., 2000; Lee et al. 1990; Schneider et al., 2010) reveals common stereotypes held when domicile publics consider homelessness. Stereotypes addressed in previous research (e.g., addiction, mental illness, inability to escape homelessness, and laziness)

were used to construct the internal narrative. Narrative probability and fidelity are achieved because this research describes attributes that domicile publics perceive to be true about homeless individuals.

3.1.3. Survey Design

Six Likert-type questions (Appendix C) were developed to help participants rate how likely they were to give the homeless individual a specific form of assistance. The forms of assistance specified in the questions included: money, food, material items (e.g., clothing or personal care items), resources (e.g., helping the individual find a homeless shelter or other community resources), transportation, and housing; each question addressed a different form of assistance. Each question included a Likert-type scale (Keyton, 2011) for participants to rate how likely they were to give the assistance indicated by the question. The scale ranged between *very unlikely* (1) to *very likely* (7). This survey did not use multiple questions to measure each form of assistance; therefore, the reliability of this measure cannot be tested and face validity was achieved (Keyton, 2011).

3.1.4. Open-ended Questions

Two open-ended questions (Appendix C) were created to answer the research question: “What factors in narratives of homelessness influence an individual’s decision to act benevolently toward homeless individuals?” Open-ended questions were developed in order to provide participants with an opportunity to express his or her thoughts (Kruger & Casey, 2009). The open-ended questions asked: “What factors in this scenario likely influence your intent to help this individual?” and “Are there any factors that you don’t know from this scenario that might impact your intent to help this individual?”

3.2. Participants

A convenience sample (Phua, 2004) of participants ages 18 and older was recruited through the university's research e-mail list (LISTSERV) and social media posts. The university's research LISERV is distributed to undergraduate students, faculty, and staff at the university. Both forms of recruitment provided participants with a recruitment notice outlining the study and any potential benefits or risks they might encounter by choosing to take part in the study.

3.2.1. Demographics

A sample of 341 participants was recruited through the university's research LISERV and social media posts. Participants were required to be 18 years of age or older to participate in this study. Of the 341 initial responses, ten were eliminated—nine because they did not answer all six Likert-type questions and one because they were under the age of 18. After eliminating incomplete surveys and participants who did not qualify for the study, a final sample was analyzed ($N = 331$).

Participants included 84 males and 247 females. Ninety-two percent of participants described themselves as white/Caucasian, 2% as Asian, 2% as Hispanic/Latino(a)/Chicano(a), 1% as African-American/black, and 1% as American Indian. Less than 1% of participants reported an ethnicity of African, Middle Eastern, or mixed ethnicity. Ages ranged from 18 to 72 years with a mean of 30.19 ($SD = 12.24$) years old. Participant education levels included: high school graduate with a diploma or equivalent (9%); some college credit, no degree (28%); trade, technical, or vocational training (2%); associate degree (5%); bachelor's degree (33%); master's degree (18%); professional degree (< 1%); and doctorate degree (4%). Population sizes of the participants' current cities were less than 10,000 (19%), 10,000-14,999 (5%), 15,000-24,999

(5%), 25,000-49,999 (13%), 50,000-99,999 (15%), 1,000,000 or more (4%). Thirty-one percent of participants reported his or her political affiliation as Democrat, 29% as Independent, 28% as Republican, and 10% as other. Participants indicated other political affiliations as no political affiliation (4%) and Libertarian (2%). Remaining political affiliations reported were conservative, green, moderate, and Socialist (< 1% each).

Sixty-seven percent of participants identified their religion as Christian (the largest denominations being Lutheran (41%), Catholic (29%), and Non-denominational (6%)), less than 1% as Hindu or Buddhism, less than 1% as Islam, 1% as Judaism, 21% as unaffiliated, and 8% as other. Other religions included Agnosticism (2%), Atheism (2%), and several others mentioned by less than 1% of participants (e.g., apatheism, secular humanism, Sikhism, spiritual, transhumanism, and Unitarian Universalism). Seventy-one percent of participants indicated that they had previously given money or another form of aid to a homeless individual. Eighty-five percent of participants did not have an immediate family member who had experienced homelessness, and 94% of participants had not personally experienced homelessness.

3.3. Data Collection

All responses were collected through the use of Qualtrics. Participants were able to complete the survey at their convenience and location. Because participants were able to complete the survey where and when they chose, a high level of confidentiality was offered to each participant. To further provide anonymity for participants, no names were collected and each participant response was assigned a number for data analysis. Participants implied consent by agreeing to the conditions of the study and by clicking “agree” on the initial screen, which then took the participant to the survey.

The Qualtrics software was programmed to randomly select one of the three narratives for each participant. After viewing the assigned narrative, participants were asked to complete Likert-type questions and open-ended questions considering the narrative he or she was assigned. Upon completion of the survey and open-ended questions, participants submitted their responses.

Data collection spanned 10 days. After all the responses were collected, the Qualtrics survey was closed to ensure no additional data were collected. All data were downloaded as an SPSS file to prepare for data analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis

3.4.1. Quantitative Analysis

Survey questions were analyzed using SPSS software. One-way ANOVAs were used to compare the effect the cause of homelessness has on the likelihood of domicile publics to provide assistance to the homeless individual. The independent variables were coded as 1 (neutral narrative), 2 (external narrative), and 3 (internal narrative). Dependent variables were each of the six forms of aid indicated by the questions (i.e., money, food, material items, resources, transportation, and housing). Significant ANOVA tests ($p < .05$) were followed up with a Student-Newman-Keuls post hoc analysis to determine which variables were significant from each other. Effect size was calculated to determine the magnitude of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Kaplan, 2004).

3.4.2. Qualitative Analysis

Answers from open-ended questions were combined by participant and then separated by narrative into three groups. All participants were assigned a number for reference. A total of 467 responses were analyzed from 289 participants. The researcher conducted an initial read-through to become familiar with the data and consider emerging themes present. Analytic memos were

taken throughout the coding process and striking responses were marked for inclusion in the results section. The marked responses received a pseudonym based on the participant's sex to improve clarity when writing the results section.

After the initial reading, first-cycle coding began by indicating themes present for each response, a form of open coding (Saldana, 2003). Noticing how participant responses were similar or different from each other assisted the researcher in identifying themes. The constant comparison method was used during open coding to refine categories and help the researcher note distinctive themes in the data (Gibbs, 2007). An initial codebook was created during first-cycle coding to improve consistency of coding and to clarify complex themes. Thirty-two codes were included in the original codebook and were later reduced during second-cycle coding.

During second-cycle coding, codes were strategically sorted and condensed in order to form a more cohesive concept of what factors influence an individual's willingness to provide assistance to homeless individuals. This was done by first identifying codes in the codebook that were similar and then reviewing participant responses to confirm that a relationship existed between codes. For example, a new code, "vulnerable" (the homeless individual is susceptible to physical or emotional attack or harm), was created to reflect a number of factors that make the homeless individual more susceptible to attack or injury (i.e., age, physical and mental disabilities, gender, and veteran status). Similarly, "lying" (how honest the homeless individual is about his or her situation) was collapsed into "scam" (the homeless person is a con artist trying to make money). Codes that appeared similar were reviewed to ensure data were accurately being collapsed into similar categories based on the context provided by participants. One example of this is "trust" (how truthful a homeless individual is perceived to be), which was collapsed into either "safety" (protection of the individual's security when assisting a homeless

individual) or “scam” depending on the context of the answer. The codebook (Appendix D) was updated to reflect these changes. The 23 remaining codes were counted and totaled in an Excel spreadsheet to determine which themes were most salient.

3.5. Conclusion

This chapter outlined methods used in the current study. This study used an experimental design with a quantitative survey to explore how the narratives of homelessness influence the intent of domicile individuals to act benevolently toward homeless populations. Qualitative questions were used to collect responses in order to provide understanding of what known and unknown factors influence a person’s willingness to offer assistance to an individual who is homeless. The next chapter presents the results of the present study and offers discussion of these results.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to understand how the causes of homelessness influence an individual's willingness to provide assistance, the present study used narratives of homeless individuals to help participants reflect on their likelihood of offering assistance to a homeless individual. A survey with Likert-type and open-ended questions was used as the method of data collection to test the hypothesis and answer the research question. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to analyze the data collected. This chapter presents and discusses the findings of this study.

4.1. Results

4.1.1. Quantitative Results

A series of one-way ANOVAs was run to compare the effect the cause of homelessness has on the likelihood of domicile publics to act benevolently toward the homeless individual. The narratives were coded numerically (i.e., neutral narrative as condition 1, external narrative as condition 2, and internal narrative as condition 3) for analysis. The magnitude of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables was determined by calculating the effect size for each ANOVA (Kaplan, 2004). Finally, a Student-Newman-Keuls post hoc analysis was used to determine which variables were significant from each other for significant ANOVAs ($p < .05$).

There was a significant effect of the cause of homelessness on likelihood to give money to a homeless individual $F(2, 329) = 44.19, p < .001, \eta^2 = .21$. A subsequent Student-Newman-Keuls test found that the mean for the external narrative ($M = 4.86, SD = 2.27$) was significantly higher than both the neutral narrative ($M = 3.01, SD = 1.77$) and the internal narrative ($M = 2.54, SD = 1.67$). These findings are consistent with hypothesis 1a.

The effect of the cause of homelessness on the likelihood to give food to a homeless individual was significant $F(2, 329) = 9.10, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$. Post hoc analysis using a Student-Newman-Keuls test revealed that the mean for the external narrative ($M = 6.12, SD = 1.98$) was significantly higher than both the neutral narrative ($M = 4.90, SD = 2.00$) and the internal narrative ($M = 5.27, SD = 2.30$). These findings are consistent with hypothesis 1b.

A statistically significant difference was found for the effect of the cause of homelessness on likelihood to give material items to a homeless individual $F(2, 329) = 10.31, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$. A Student-Newman-Keuls test showed that the external narrative ($M = 5.82, SD = 1.99$) was higher than the neutral narrative ($M = 4.48, SD = 2.14$) and the internal narrative ($M = 4.95, SD = 2.28$). These findings are consistent with hypothesis 1c.

There was a significant effect of the cause of homelessness on the likelihood to help a homeless individual find community resources $F(2, 329) = 16.10, p < .001, \eta^2 = .09$. A later Student-Newman-Keuls test found that all three conditions were significantly different from each other. The external narrative ($M = 6.02, SD = 2.04$) was the highest of the conditions, followed by the internal narrative ($M = 4.92, SD = 2.28$) and then the neutral narrative ($M = 4.34, SD = 2.51$). These findings are consistent with hypothesis 1d.

A statistically significant difference was found for the effect of the cause of homelessness on the likelihood to assist a homeless individual with transportation needs $F(2, 329) = 31.36, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$. Post hoc comparisons using a Student-Newman-Keuls test found that the mean for the external narrative ($M = 4.72, SD = 2.19$) was higher than both the neutral narrative ($M = 2.74, SD = 1.90$) and the internal narrative ($M = 2.85, SD = 2.01$). These findings are consistent with hypothesis 1e.

The effect of the cause of homelessness on the likelihood to give a homeless individual a place to stay was significant $F(2, 329) = 30.40, p < .001, \eta^2 = .16$. A subsequent Student-Newman-Keuls test found that the external narrative ($M = 3.38, SD = 2.12$) was higher than both the neutral narrative ($M = 1.82, SD = 1.37$) and internal narrative ($M = 1.91, SD = 1.36$). These findings are consistent with hypothesis 1f.

4.1.2. Qualitative Results

Two open-ended questions were coded thematically to understand the factors that influence an individual's decision to act benevolently toward homeless individuals. During coding, it was revealed that 22 factors influenced participants' willingness to provide assistance to a homeless individual. Of these factors, 12 were salient throughout the data. For purposes of this study, a theme was considered salient if it was mentioned by more than 10% of participants. Salient factors are presented below.

Participants of this study were most concerned about the cause of homelessness. Cause was cited by participants in 30.80% of responses ($N = 89$), was found in all three narratives (neutral = 33, external = 41, internal = 15), and aligned with the hypothesis of this study (i.e., participants are more likely to assist when external factors are perceived to cause homelessness). Brianna, a participant who received the neutral narrative stated that she was unwilling to provide assistance because the scenario provided "no explanation why he\she became homeless." Mary stated that she would be willing to provide assistance to the individual from the external narrative "as their homelessness is not a result of their own actions." Michelle received the internal narrative and indicated that her willingness to assist the homeless individual was influenced by "the fact that much of the situation was caused by choices and not by things out of the person's control."

Participants also reported the vulnerability of a homeless individual as an important factor considered when acting benevolently. Vulnerability was conveyed in 29.76% of participant responses ($N = 86$) and appeared to be important across all narratives (neutral = 42, external = 15, internal = 29). Bailey was concerned about “age, physical/mental health status, if the person is alone (versus with adults, a child, or a pet), [and] if the person has clothing appropriate for weather conditions.” Kelsey also considered vulnerability stating her willingness to assist would be influenced “if he or she had a family or not... [o]r if the individual had a disability of some type that enabled him or her to do the work that he or she had struggled with and left.”

Participants indicated they would be less likely to help if the homeless individual appeared apathetic about his or her situation. Additionally, many participants questioned the ways in which the homeless individual was trying to escape homelessness. Originally, these factors (apathy and escape) were coded separately; however, closer analysis indicated that participants were concerned about whether or not the homeless individual was trying to remedy his or her situation. Sixty-nine participants (23.88%) indicated that if the homeless individual was disinterested in improving his or her life, they would be less likely to help. Participants who received the internal narrative mentioned this factor far more than participants of the other two narrative (neutral = 13, external = 6, internal = 50). Emily questioned if the individual was “seeking help—other than handouts—to better themselves[.]” Eleanor suggested that homeless individuals might not attempt to escape homelessness out of laziness and stated, “Everyone has the opportunity to get a job. A lot of homeless people are begging for money IN the Walmart parking lot. Our Walmart has hundreds of open positions. GO IN, GET A JOB. Don’t be lazy.”

Walter echoed these concerns by stating, “[i]f they don’t try, they shouldn’t get handouts for doing nothing.”

Substance abuse was mentioned in 21.80% of participant responses ($N = 63$). Substance abuse was most prominently discussed in the neutral and internal narratives (neutral = 25, external = 5, internal = 33). Brenda indicated that the “factors that would influence [her] most [are] the addiction and refusal of treatment.” Paul noted that a homeless individual being “under the influence when they approached [him]...” would influence his decision to help him or her. Melissa agreed, saying, “If the individual is not engaging in substance abuse, I am more likely to help.”

Participants were also very concerned about their safety when providing assistance to a homeless individual (20.42%, $N = 59$). Safety was an important theme across all narratives (neutral = 25, external = 14, internal = 20). Grace mentioned “[f]ear of the unknown, including worries of harm or theft, contribute to my [interaction].” Safety was also a concern to participants who received the external narrative such as Olivia, “I would like to help them, as their homelessness is not a result of their own actions, but I’m not willing to risk my own safety by doing so.”

The personal connection between the participant and the homeless individual was important to participants. Fifty-nine participants (20.42%) reported being more likely to assist the homeless individual if they knew him or her personally. For some participants, a personal relationship with the homeless individual was the only factor considered when deciding to provide assistance. Knowing the homeless person personally was salient in all three narratives (neutral = 20, external = 26, internal = 13). Charles said, “Things would likely change if I knew the person in the scenario directly—if that was the case I like to think I’d be more likely to offer

help.” Helen had similar thoughts, stating, “[i]f I had some kind of personal connection to the individual... I’d be more likely to help him or her.”

Responsibility, if the homeless individual is perceived to be capable of being trusted for his or her own wellbeing, was indicated as being important by 14.19% of participants ($N = 41$). Responsibility was cited most frequently in the neutral narrative (neutral = 21, external = 12, internal = 8). Some participants, such as Alice, pointed out specific behaviors that made a homeless individual more responsible: “The fact that they have a backpack with belongings I like because they might have to save up to get the backpack, which shows they are able to manage money OK.” Other participants were less specific in what qualifies a homeless individual as responsible. Ruth stated that a “sense of whether the individual is capable” was a factor that influenced her willingness to assist the individual.

Regardless of other factors, participants considered the need of the homeless individual as being an element that influenced their willingness to provide assistance for all narratives (12.80%, $N = 37$; neutral = 13, external = 10, internal = 14). Claire said, “They lack food, shelter, and clothing. No one should lack these things no matter what.” Josh and Ryan took a more human approach to providing assistance stating, “They are alive and need help... so I must...” and “I don’t need a fact-checked life history to help one of my brothers or sisters in need.”

Participants also recognize that their community may or may not have resources available to assist homeless individuals. The availability of community resources and willingness of a homeless individual to use these resources was indicated by 11.42% of participants ($N = 33$) as being a factor influencing their decision-making process. Participants receiving the neutral narrative indicated community resources as being a factor in their decision most frequently (neutral = 16, external = 7, internal = 10). Some participants indicated that the use of community

resources made them more likely to provide assistance. Lauren stated, “Homeless shelters typically have strict rules that are often times hard for adults to follow... The fact that the individual is not kicked out or banned from the shelter increases the likelihood that I would assist them.” Other participants indicated that the availability of community resources would decrease the likelihood of helping a homeless individual. Emma mentioned, “[t]he amount of local resources for homeless people influences my likelihood to help. I would be less likely to help a homeless person on the street... because I know there are sufficient shelters with meals and beds.”

Thirty-two participants (11.07%), especially those receiving the internal narrative (neutral = 8, external = 6, internal = 18), indicated that the homeless individual might spend the resources that are given to him or her in a way that was inappropriate. Hannah asserts, “[i]t may not be wise to simply give them money, as it may be spent on something that doesn’t really help the individual.” Hannah agrees, stating, “[a]s far as giving money to the individual, I would say no. Sometimes you don’t know one’s situation, if the money would actually be used for a hotel, etc.”

The participant’s resources to help the homeless individual also have a bearing on the likelihood to provide assistance to a homeless individual. Having adequate resources was mentioned by 10.73% of participants ($N = 31$). Participants discussed their own resources more frequently in the neutral and external narratives (neutral = 14, external = 5, internal = 5). Brandon was concerned about his security and reported that he is “not really financially able to help others.”

Not wanting to be cheated out of their resources, 10.38% of participants ($N = 30$) indicated that the homeless individual might be lying in order to make money. Participants who

received the neutral and external narratives more commonly indicated the individual's homelessness might be a scam (neutral = 13, external = 11, internal = 6). Heather asserts her skepticism stating,

I've heard people don't always tell the truth in these situations... I've also heard people lie about why they are actually homeless so it doesn't sound so bad or so it is... a socially acceptable reason, as well as people who panhandle and say they are homeless when they are not actually homeless.

Ten themes remain but were not salient throughout the data. These include the appearance (6.92%) and personality (5.88%) of the homeless individual, criminal history of the homeless individual (5.54%), whether or not somebody else was helping the homeless individual (5.54%), the homeless individual's behavior (4.50%), the duration of homelessness (4.15%), what the homeless individual owns (2.77%), the participant giving to a community resource that can assist homeless individuals (2.08%), and the location where the homeless individual is asking for assistance (1.04%). These themes were not considered salient because they were found at a relatively low rate in the data and it is likely that they fit in other categories. The researcher could not confidently collapse smaller codes into larger categories due to limited context in participant responses. For example, duration of homelessness could be linked to a homeless individual's attempt to escape homelessness or the location of the encounter may be mentioned due to a participant's safety concerns, but without an explanation from the participant as to why duration would affect their decision, responses mentioning duration could not be combined into broader categories.

4.2. Discussion

This study was conducted to discover how the narratives of homelessness impact domicile individuals' willingness to provide assistance to homeless individuals. As predicted in the hypothesis, narratives of homelessness influence an individual's willingness to provide assistance to a homeless individual. Qualitative responses found that cause was the most frequently indicated factor influencing an individual's likelihood to provide assistance, supporting the hypothesis. Interestingly, vulnerability was the second most represented concern for participants in the qualitative data. Taken together, the quantitative data and most salient qualitative themes suggest that domicile individuals may divide homeless individuals into categories (e.g., deserving or undeserving) when deciding whether or not to provide assistance (Pellegrini et al., 1997; Feldman, 2006; Schneider & Remillard, 2013).

A surprising result of the quantitative findings was that while participants were more willing to assist the individual in the external narrative for all forms of assistance, the neutral and internal narratives were not significantly different from each other except in one type of assistance (resources). One explanation for this finding is exemplification theory, which suggests individuals use past experiences to form exemplars based on "typicality rather than by quantified precision," which are used to make decisions about situations that appear to be similar to their past experiences (Gibson & Zillmann, 1994, p. 604). Individuals may not have time to investigate each homeless individual they encounter. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that individuals would use a cognitive shortcut in order to judge a situation (Zillman et al., 1996). Because media portrayals of homelessness tend to stress individualistic causes (Buck et al., 2004; Hodgetts et al., 2005; Penner & Penner, 1994; Schneider, 2010), it makes sense that

individuals would assume individualistic causes for homelessness when little information is given.

Similar to prior research (Link et al., 1995a; Lee & Farrell, 2003; Morgan et al., 1997), despite the cause of homelessness, many participants indicated that they wanted to help in some form. Some participants specified certain types of assistance they would provide (e.g., food or clothing), and others indicated that they gave to community resources that can help homeless individuals. Several participants noted that they “would like to help, but...”, statements that are similar to those used by participants in a 2013 study by Schneider & Remillard. Schneider and Remillard suggest that when domicile individuals use qualifying statements when describing their attempts to assist homeless individuals, it “undercut[s] the claims made by participants about social responsibility and reinforce[s] a common perception of homeless people as agents of their own decrepitude” (p. 103).

While many participants are willing to provide help to homeless individuals, few are willing to do so at the expense of their safety or resources. Safety, in particular, was a major concern for participants and several less salient themes likely embody safety concerns (e.g., behavior of the homeless individual, criminal activity, and location where the individual is being approached). Participants also mentioned the availability of resources, usually time and money, frequently. Concern for the protection of resources not only stemmed from availability, but also the concern that the homeless individual might not spend the resources wisely or was being untruthful in order to make a profit. It is logical that individuals want to protect themselves and their families before reaching out to a stranger to provide assistance. This need for protection also provides some context for the theme of whether or not there is a personal connection between the domicile individual and the homeless individual.

Ultimately, whether or not the assistance makes a lasting effect on the homeless individual's life depends on his or her willingness to escape homelessness. Participants felt that homeless individuals who were willing to improve their life and were actively working to escape from homelessness were more worthy of assistance than those who had given up or seemed apathetic toward their situation. Participants typically described apathetic homeless individuals as people who were lazy or needed to get a job instead of accepting handouts. Individuals who hold this view are likely using an exemplar from their personal experiences or the media, as 40% of homeless individuals hold part-time or full-time jobs but are unable to afford housing (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2015). The concepts of apathy and escape further support the idea that domicile individuals divide homeless individuals into categories such as "deserving" or "undeserving" prior to giving assistance.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter presented and discussed the findings of this study. The findings were consistent with the hypothesis for all forms of assistance. During qualitative analysis, themes were identified as being important factors that individuals consider when deciding whether or not to provide assistance to a homeless individual. Ultimately, cause of homelessness plays a major role in how domicile individuals choose to interact with homeless populations. The next chapter will provide a conclusion to this study, discuss limitations of the study, and suggest areas for future research.

5. IMPLICATIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Homelessness is a social issue that affects between 2.5 and 3.5 million individuals every year (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2015). Both structural causes (i.e., aspects the homeless individual cannot control) and individualistic causes (i.e., aspects the homeless individual is personally responsible for) contribute to homelessness in the United States. While many domicile individuals understand that the causes of homelessness are complex (Buck et al., 2004), stereotypes of homelessness are still prominent among domicile publics (Boydell & Goering, 2000; Knecht & Martinez, 2009; Lee et al., 1990). Previous research has indicated what domicile individuals perceive to be the causes of homelessness (Knecht & Martinez, 2009; Lee et al., 1990) and how and why domicile individuals choose to help homeless individuals (Hodgetts et al., 2012; Lee & Farrell, 2003; Lee et al., 2004; Schneider & Remillard, 2013). However, the way these two factors (i.e., cause of homelessness and willingness to assist) interact is not well documented.

Giomo (1992) and Morgan et al. (1997) agree that long-term changes in both social attitudes and actions are required to eliminate homelessness. Understanding the benevolent behaviors of domicile individuals is an important step toward making the societal changes necessary to reduce the homeless population in the United States. The communication received about homelessness may play an important role in the decision-making process domicile individuals use when faced with the opportunity to assist a homeless individual. Therefore, this study explored how communication in the form of narratives influences the likelihood of domicile individuals to assist homeless individuals.

Fisher's (1984) narrative paradigm was used in this study as a framework for understanding how domicile individuals choose which homeless individuals are worthy of

benevolence. Narratives extend beyond culture, history, and setting to “give order to human experience” (Fisher, 1984, p.6; 1987; 1989). Through narratives, individuals have the opportunity to form a personal connection with the storyteller, making narratives persuasive in nature (Slater & Rouner, 2002). Nonetheless, many domicile individuals do not have extended, meaningful contact with homeless populations and most likely receive narratives of homelessness through the media and highly visible members of the homeless population (Buck et al., 2004; Hodgetts et al., 2005, Novak & Harter, 2008; Schneider, 2010; Snow & Mulcahy, 2001). These narratives become exemplars and are later used to decide whether a homeless individual does or does not deserve assistance (Zillman, 1999; Zillman et al., 1996). With this in mind, this study posed the following hypothesis and research question:

H: People will be more likely to act benevolently in terms of a) money, b) food, c) material items, d) resources, e) transportation, and f) housing when they perceive structural causes compared to individual causes in homeless narratives.

RQ: What factors in narratives of homelessness influence an individual’s decision to act benevolently toward homeless individuals?

A convenience sample ($N = 331$) consisting of 84 males and 247 females was recruited through the university’s research LISTSERV and social media sites. Participants were required to be 18 years of age or older for this study. Responses were collected from individuals of various ages (18-72), ethnicities (Caucasian/ white, Asian, Hispanic/ Latino(a)/ Chicano(a)/ African American/ black, American Indian, African, Middle Eastern, and mixed), education levels (high school graduate with a diploma or equivalent; some college credit, no degree; trade, technical, or vocational training; associate degree; bachelor’s degree; master’s degree; professional degree; and doctorate degree), political affiliations (Democrat, Independent,

Republican, no political affiliation, Libertarian, conservative, green, moderate, and Socialist), religions (Christianity, Hindu/ Buddhism, Islam, Judaism, unaffiliated, agnosticism, atheism, apatheism, secular humanism, Sikhism, spiritual, transhumanism, and Unitarian Universalism), and living in a variety of city sizes (population: less than 10,000 to 1,000,000 plus).

Three narratives were constructed to meet the principles of narrative probability (i.e., coherent and congruent with past experiences) and narrative fidelity (i.e., believable). The purpose of these narratives was to provide participants with a specific context to reflect on while completing the survey. Each narrative portrayed a homeless individual suffering from a different cause of homelessness: neutral (i.e., no cause of homelessness provided), external (i.e., structural causes), and internal (i.e., individualistic causes). Qualtrics randomly assigned one of the three narratives to each participant before they completed the survey.

Six Likert-type questions were used to measure participants' likelihood to provide assistance in the forms of money, food, material items (e.g., clothing or personal care items), resources (e.g., helping the individual find a homeless shelter or other community resources), transportation, and housing. These Likert-type questions were used to test the hypothesis. Two open-ended questions asking the known and unknown factors of the scenario that influenced participants' willingness to assist the individual in the narrative were used to answer the research question.

The effect that the cause of homelessness has on the likelihood of domicile publics to act benevolently toward homeless individuals was determined through a series of one-way ANOVAs run in SPSS software. The narratives served as the independent variables and the dependent variables were each of the six forms of aid (i.e., money, food, material items, resources, transportation, and housing). Consistent with the hypothesis, a statistically significant

difference was found for the effect of the cause of homelessness on likelihood to assist a homeless individual with money, food, material items, resources, transportation, and housing. Post hoc analysis revealed that in five conditions (money, food, material items, transportation, and housing), the external narrative was significantly higher than the neutral and internal narratives. The remaining condition (resources) was significantly different across all three narratives, with external being the highest and neutral being the lowest. These results indicate that narratives of homelessness influence the likelihood of a domicile individual to act benevolently toward a person who is homeless.

Open-ended questions were thematically coded using the constant comparison method. After initial codes were created, they were strategically sorted and condensed to form a cohesive concept of which factors influence a domicile individual's willingness to assist a homeless individual. Qualitative analysis revealed 12 salient factors that are important to participants when they are deciding whether or not to provide assistance to a homeless individual: cause of homelessness, vulnerability of the homeless individual, whether or not the homelessness individual engages in substance abuse, the participant's safety while providing assistance, whether or not the participant has a personal connection with the homeless individual, how responsible the participant perceives the homeless individual to be, if the homeless individual is apathetic toward his or her situation, the level of need of the homeless individual, availability of community resources, how the resources given will be used by the homeless individual, the participant's available resources, whether or not the homeless person is actually homeless (i.e., is it a scam to make money), and if the homeless individual is trying to escape homelessness.

5.1. Implications

This study revealed that individuals consider narratives of homelessness to be an important factor when deciding whether or not to act benevolently and ultimately use this information to divide homeless individuals into categories to determine whether or not they are worthy of assistance. Qualitative responses for this study were consistent with current media portrayals of homelessness, specifically the portrayal of individualistic causes and placing blame on the homeless individuals (Buck et al., 2004; Hodgetts et al., 2005; Penner & Penner, 1994; Schneider, 2010). For example, some participants who received the external narrative (the only narrative telling a true story of an actual homeless individual) doubted the authenticity of the narrative and indicated that the individual might be untruthful about certain aspects of his or her situation for personal gain. It is important to note that neither the neutral narrative nor the internal narrative was ever questioned by participants. With this in mind, it makes sense that domicile publics may be using media depictions of homelessness as exemplars to judge homeless individuals (Zillman, 1999; Zillman et al., 1996). Understanding that, in the case of homelessness, narratives are powerful persuasion tools and influence benevolent behaviors of domicile individuals emphasizes the importance of accurate depictions of homelessness in sources where narratives of homelessness are told, specifically the media.

Not only did participants provide answers consistent with stereotypes portrayed in the media, but also few participants recognized the factors they reported in qualitative responses as being stereotypical views of homelessness (e.g., lazy, involved in substance abuse, and dangerous) rather than truthful representations. Because participants of this study were of diverse ages and backgrounds, it appears stereotypes about homelessness are persistent across time and cultures. This suggests that more education about homelessness and its causes is necessary for

domicile individuals in order to reduce stereotypes about homelessness. If domicile individuals are able to recognize the stereotypes they hold about homelessness, they may adopt more positive attitudes toward individuals of the homeless population and experience an increased willingness to support the rights of homeless individuals (Lee et al., 2004).

5.2. Limitations

One limitation of this study was that the use of a convenience sample gave little control over who took the survey. A majority of study participants were women (74.6%), which is not representative of the United States population. While this factor was not considered during data analysis, Lee and Farrell (2003) suggest that women typically have more favorable attitudes about homeless individuals than men. Furthermore, at least some of the participants in this study had experience with homeless populations due to involvement in community or government agencies that assist homeless individuals. While it is unknown how many participants had experience with homeless populations, it is possible that these responses influenced the outcome of this study. If the participants did not have qualities that have been shown to increase compassion toward homeless populations (e.g., female and extended meaningful contact with homeless individuals), it is possible that the findings of this study would have been stronger. Participants who work with homeless individuals on a regular basis may not influence whether the hypotheses are supported; however, it is likely that the relationship in the quantitative data would be greater and that the themes identified in the open-ended data would change. For example, some participant responses indicated positive attitudes toward homelessness. If participants were not connected with homelessness in a meaningful way, it is possible that factors such as need, vulnerability, and community resources will not be as prevalent as it was in the data set for this study.

Future studies exploring this phenomenon should employ a sampling method that allows for greater control by the researcher. Preliminary questions to qualify participants for the study such as: “Do you work or volunteer for an organization that assists homeless populations on a regular basis?” could also be used to increase population accuracy. Using a more precise sampling method or qualifying questions will allow the researcher to understand how the general public, which does not typically have extended meaningful contact with homeless populations, responds to narratives of homelessness.

A second limitation in this study was the quality of qualitative responses received. Some decisions while coding were limited due to the lack of context in participant responses. In future studies, this could be remedied by asking participants to clearly describe the factors that influence their decisions and explain why that factor influences their decision-making. Participants should also be encouraged to provide a specific example (real or hypothetical) of the factors that influence their decisions to act benevolently toward homeless individuals. With richer data, researchers will be able to make better inferences about participant thought processes when deciding to assist and perceptions about the issue of homelessness.

5.3. Directions for Future Research

Several participants indicated distrust toward the external narrative, likely because it did not fit in with the exemplars they typically use to understand homeless populations. Future research should investigate how the level of contact with homeless populations changes the way domicile individuals perceive narratives of homelessness. Specifically, researchers should work to understand if meaningful contact with homeless individuals increases the receptivity of external narratives among domicile publics. Lee et al. (2004) state that higher levels of contact with homeless individuals change the way domicile publics perceive homelessness. However, it

is possible that contact with an individual who does not conform to the stereotypes commonly held by domicile individuals only serves to create a subcategory of homeless individuals rather than change the domicile individual's perception of homelessness as a whole (Hamburger, 1994). If contact with homeless individuals that the public considers atypical merely creates a subcategory, then it is possible that homeless individuals are only divided into categories such as "deserving" and "undeserving" all the more. Understanding if and how domicile publics perceive narratives differently after contact with homeless individuals would provide an extension to theories about contact; knowledge that is useful in a variety of areas including experiential learning and community outreach programs.

This study provided an initial look at how narratives of homelessness influence the benevolent behaviors of domicile individuals. Future researchers should consider taking a stronger qualitative approach to studying the persuasive nature of narratives. While this study asked which known and unknown factors influenced the participants' likelihood to provide assistance, the interaction of some factors was unclear in participant responses. Focus groups and interviews would allow the researcher the flexibility to ask probing questions in order to clarify why participants cite certain factors as being important. For example, this study had participants who mentioned appearance and clothing of the homeless individual as factors that might change their likelihood to provide assistance. While it could be inferred that these factors are linked to responsibility (i.e., the homeless individual cares about their wellbeing and shows it through personal hygiene) or if the homeless individual is using a scam to make money (i.e., if the individual is wearing brand name clothing or "clothing I cannot afford" as one participant noted), with the brief responses provided, this study could not confidently assign appearance and clothing to a broader category.

Future research should also work to understand a directional relationship between the factors domicile individuals consider to be important and their likelihood to provide assistance. More detailed quantitative techniques could provide insight as to which factors increase a domicile individual's benevolence and which decrease the likelihood to act benevolently. An understanding of how specific factors influence benevolence could be used in the construction of future narratives and aid in reducing stereotypes.

Researchers should also analyze women's attitudes of homelessness specifically. For example, women may perceive homeless individuals as dangerous because of common narratives about males and individuals who have histories of criminal activity or substance abuse who are homeless. However, females have also been shown to be more compassionate toward homeless individuals than males (Lee & Farrell, 2003). Cultivation theory "focuses on the consequences of exposure to... recurrent patterns of stories, images, and messages" (Gerbner, 1998, p. 191). Examining how women respond to narratives of homelessness may extend the study of cultivation theory and provide insight into how influential media portrayals of homelessness are.

5.4. Conclusion

Practical applications of this study stress the importance of accurate representations in narratives. This study indicates that narratives are persuasive and influence benevolent behaviors of domicile individuals toward homeless individuals. Recognizing the power of narratives, it is important that narrative sources (e.g., media) depict truthful representations of homelessness. Furthermore, stereotypes remain widespread across a diverse group of participants. This may indicate that methods to reduce stereotypes, including education about homelessness and its causes, are needed among domicile publics.

A limitation of this study was the method used for sampling. It is unclear if or how participants involved with homeless individuals on a regular basis influenced the results of this study. Future researchers should maintain control over the sampling method or ask qualifying questions to gain a perspective of how narratives of homelessness influence individuals who do not have extended meaningful contact with homeless individuals.

The present study took an initial look at how narratives influence benevolent behaviors of domicile individuals. Future research should extend this study by examining if and how contact with homeless populations changes the public's understanding of homeless narratives. Further research should consider the interaction between factors of homelessness that influence benevolence and identify a directional relationship between specific factors that domicile publics find important and the likelihood to provide assistance. Continued research between narratives of homelessness and domicile individuals' benevolent behaviors is one step toward the long-term changes in social attitudes and actions Giamo (1992) and Morgan et al. (1997) suggest for eliminating homelessness.

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APPENDIX A. DEMOGRAPHIC SURVEY

Your answers to the following questions will help us to better understand interactions between the general public and homeless individuals. Your responses will be kept confidential.

1. What is your sex?
 - a. Female
 - b. Male

2. What is your ethnicity?
 - a. African American/Black
 - b. African
 - c. American Indian/Alaskan
 - d. Asian
 - e. Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
 - f. Hispanic/Latino(a)/Chicano(a)
 - g. Middle Eastern
 - h. White/Caucasian
 - i. Other (please specify): _____

3. What is your age? _____

4. What is your highest level of education?
 - a. Some high school, no diploma
 - b. High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (ex. GED)
 - c. Some college credit, no degree
 - d. Trade/technical/vocational training
 - e. Associate degree

- f. Bachelor's degree
 - g. Master's degree
 - h. Professional degree
 - i. Doctorate degree
5. What is the population of the city in which you currently reside?
- a. Less than 10,000
 - b. 10,000 – 14,999
 - c. 15,000 – 24,999
 - d. 25,000 – 49,999
 - e. 50,000 – 99,999
 - f. 100,000 – 499,999
 - g. 500,000 – 999,999
 - h. 1,000,000 or More
6. What is your political affiliation?
- a. Democrat
 - b. Republican
 - c. Other (please specify): _____
7. What is your religion?
- a. Christianity (please specify): _____
 - b. Hinduism/Buddhism
 - c. Islam
 - d. Judaism
 - e. Unaffiliated

- f. Other (please specify): _____
- 8. Have you ever given money or another form of aid to a homeless individual?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes (please specify) _____
- 9. Has one of your immediate family members ever experienced homelessness?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes
- 10. Have you ever experienced homelessness?
 - a. No
 - b. Yes

APPENDIX B. NARRATIVES

Narrative A

An individual became homeless six months ago. This individual lives in an urban area and typically spends the night in homeless shelters. If the weather is nice, this individual will camp outside on the street overnight. This individual carries a backpack of belongings and has been seen asking for assistance in the area where s/he lives.

Narrative B

An individual suffered a devastating accident resulting in the loss of vision. Unable to see, the individual asked a trusted neighbor to mail rent money to the landlord. Instead of mailing the money, the neighbor pocketed the rent money. Because the individual did not pay rent, s/he was evicted, resulting in this individual becoming homeless. Since the accident, this individual has been unable to find employment (Adapted from Jesser Smith, 2015).

Narrative C

An individual first experienced homelessness as a young adult. After struggling with work, s/he turned to drugs and alcohol to escape the increasingly difficult situation. Because of addiction, this individual was fired and became unable to find stable employment. S/he has been arrested several times, refuses rehabilitation services, and no longer seeks employment.

APPENDIX C. SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. How likely are you to give this individual money?
2. How likely are you to give this individual food?
3. How likely are you to give this person material items (such as clothing or personal care items)?
4. How likely are you to assist this individual in finding resources that help homeless individuals (such as a homeless shelter or other community resource)?
5. How likely are you to give this individual a place to stay?
6. How likely are you to assist this person with transportation needs?
7. What factors in this scenario likely influence your intent to help this individual?
8. Are there factors that you don't know from this scenario that might impact your intent to help this individual?

APPENDIX D. CODEBOOK

Apathy- The individual is not working to resolve their homelessness (opposite of escape)

Appearance- The way the homeless individual looks

Behavior- The way the homeless individual acts/ conduct of the homeless individual

Belongings- The items the homeless individual owns

Bystander- Others are already helping the homeless individual

Cause- The reason for homelessness

Crime- The homeless individual has an association with criminal activity (perceived or known)

Community- Whether or not the homeless individual is able to be or willing to be served by
community resources

Elsewhere- Participant indicates that they give money to other places that can help homeless
individuals (qualifier)

Escape- The homeless individual is working to end his/her homelessness (opposite of apathy)

Known- The individual knows the homeless individual personally

Length- Duration of the individual's homelessness

Location- The geographical area where the homeless individual is asking for assistance

Need- The homeless individual requires assistance

Personality- Whether or not the homeless individual is perceived as being nice

Resources- Whether or not the participant feels they have enough time, money, etc. to help

Responsible- Whether or not the homeless individual is perceived to be capable of being trusted
for his or her own wellbeing

Safety- Protection of the participant's security or the security of his or her family while assisting

Scam- Whether or not there is an actual need for assistance or if the homeless individual is “faking” to make money

Spend- Whether or not resources given to the homeless individual are used appropriately

Substance- Whether or not the homeless individual is a substance abuser (perceived or known)

Trust- The homeless individual is perceived to be truthful

Vulnerable- Whether or not the homeless individual is susceptible to physical or emotional attack or harm (age, dependents, mental disorder, gender, fleeing abuse, and disability)