## Abstract

The homeless population has long-carried a stigma. Negligence, avoidance and labeling have been used to deal with the homeless population. Conflict theory and social deviance theory are two supportive sociological theories that align with this population. Either is an approach that shows disproportionate treatment against the homeless is non-productive, or does nothing to stop the problem in our community. Proposed initiatives have been supported based on the literature, where removal of the stigma surrounding the homeless becomes an initial and integral step in moving forward with a foundational approach to community. This proposal is based on bringing a new approach to the community, one that is not dismissive of this population, but one that is supportive of promoting second chances for those who are struggling with mental illness, labeling, or have been categorized as social outcasts, as is the case for many homeless living in our community. Through these changes, the homeless issue may be reduced.

## The Conflict Theory: Homelessness and Health

The social problem related to health in the community is based on the conflict theory, when assessing homelessness. Beyond the stigma that determines communitywide perception of the homeless, the long-standing sociological theory here argues that there is competition for scarce resources. Housing, food, clothing are all resources, where housing is the focus of this theory and discussion. Conflict theory recognizes that there are not enough resources to support the entire population, where the natural response of this community has been to use negligence and avoidance when dealing with the homeless population. An improved approach will show that they are participants of the community, that they have the potential to contribute, and that conflict theory can potentially bring people together to share resources, rather than separating community members.

Homeless participants struggling with addiction are unable to work. Thus, this is a two-part solution, where the first phase is to stop the addiction, intervene, and promote treatment options available to the homeless participants. Then, the second phase moves forward with opportunity. Once the individual is clean of drugs and alcohol abuse, simply leaving him or her to the streets is not a viable option. Alternatively, assisting with finding a job and setting new goals to find opportunities is a much more viable option. As Moxley, Hoj &amp; Novilla (2020) find, the predictors show that homelessness goes up as substance abuse increases. As abuse does down, the idea is to show these individuals that they matter.

## Justification

The ultimate goal is to return these individuals to a position where they are contributing members of society. The justification for the two-stage approach is based on these standards. Homeless individuals do not feel they matter. They are left to drink themselves to death or use substances until they are in prison or dead. This proposal shows them that they do matter, and proposes changes to how they are treated, using intervention rather than avoidance. Given the literature, this will be a successful initiative for the homeless participants, where they are able to move away from the substance abuse, find a job, and take self-driven accountability. This is a population in need of support, where it is time to change the avoidance strategies that simply have not worked for our community.

## Conclusion

Health and wellness are the foundation of a community. The hope is that reducing the stigma of homelessness leads to favorable outcomes moving forward. Through collective support, patterns of change are possible, and will move in the appropriate direction for a vulnerable population. This begins with removing the stigma that has been aligned with the homeless, looks closer at the theories, and uses critical thinking to formulate a viable solution.