

Houseless versus homeless: An exploratory study of Native Hawaiian beach dwellers on Oahu's west coast

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This research focuses on the self-perceptions of Hawaii's homeless population, specifically, the homeless beach dwellers on Oahu's west coast, as well as the perceptions of the homeless service providers whose job it is to meet their needs. A review of the literature indicates that homelessness in the United States continues to increase, with the largest group within this population being single parents with children. The current research elaborates on the numerous social policies that have been enacted including judicial polices outlawing such behavior. The literature further clarifies the noted stereotypes associated with the homeless population. What is missing in the research is the perspective or voice of a subgroup of the homeless population on Oahu's west coast. Here, numerous individuals including intact families live in makeshift shelters on the beach that they call home.

Part one of this study examined the homelessness epidemic in the United States and reviewed the theories associated with these marginalized populations. Part two of this study explored the experiences and perceptions of this indigenous group of Native Hawaiian homeless living on Oahu to determine who composes this unique subgroup of the larger homeless population. The selected participants participated in in-depth interviews and were asked to share their experiences. Their stories and, more importantly to this study, their voices were heard. Their lives living as houseless families were explored and explained. Their needs were expressed by them and seen through their lenses. Finally, part three of this study explored the perceptions and experiences of the service providers who work with the Native Hawaiian beach dwellers. An in-depth look at the services provided was also conducted. The findings and implications from these various voices are discussed and a direction for future research and social policy creation are presented.