

Siouxland Street Project:

Interviewing poor people who spend their time in public spaces

~ ©Julia Kleinschmit, BJ, MSW, CSW and Sara Staver, BSW, May 17, 2016

Background

In January 2016, community partners and stakeholders gathered to discuss how the community of Sioux City can address the issue of vagrancy compassionately and effectively. Major goals of the project include expanding and utilizing current resources to address concerns of vagrancy and homelessness in downtown Sioux City. Renamed the Siouxland Street Project (SSP), several work committees were developed to advance the community's larger goal of ending homelessness and vagrancy. One of the Research Committee's tasks was to develop a questionnaire and analyze the specific needs of people in Sioux City that are considered homeless or vagrant.

With approval of University of Iowa faculty, Sara Staver, a University of Iowa, School of Social Work graduate student, coordinated the SSP interviewing project and created a questionnaire comprised of 60 quantitative and qualitative inquiries for individual study school credit.

Design

To better understand the characteristics and explore experiences of people that spend the majority of their time in public places in Sioux City, the study used both qualitative and quantitative data collection, a mixed methods research design of descriptive statistical analysis and traditional inquiry using qualitative data.

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. A convenience sample of 100 individuals were interviewed. Participants were solicited in public areas where SSP partners and stakeholders have experienced groups of people spending time during the day.

Volunteer interviewers for the SSP were recruited through 'word of mouth' announcement made by instructors of the social work program at both Briar Cliff University and University of Iowa. Ten volunteers were recruited; two undergraduate social work students, four graduate social work students, two university instructors of social work, an area counselor, and a local therapist. All volunteers could participate in a training session held on February 19, 2016. This allowed volunteers to review the questionnaire and practice engagement and interviewing skills. Four volunteers participated in the training session and two were provided training on another date.

Setting

Volunteers, in teams of two, were assigned target areas to canvas for participants. Interviews were held from February 26, 2016 to March 1, 2016. Sioux City Public Library (Wilbur Aalfs) staff agreed to act as centralized location for volunteers to pick up and drop off materials.

Initial targeted public areas included the skywalks, the Wilbur Aalfs Library, sidewalks along Wesley Parkway, Cook Park and surrounding areas, sidewalks along Jackson Street and Pearl Street, and old downtown Sioux City. Due to safety concerns, the area of Cook Park was eliminated. Unexpectedly, after one day of interviewing, people interested in being interviewed gathered at the library and actively sought out the volunteers requesting to take part in an interview. About 50% (n=49) of the total participant sample was collected at the library, leaving some target areas uncanvassed. The remaining service areas included the Warming Shelter (32), Gospel Mission (8), skywalks (2), sidewalks near bus stations (4), and Hard Rock Casino (2).

Participants

SSP participants had to be 18 years of age, able to complete the interview in English, and indicate they spent a great deal of their days on the street or in other public places, either by choice, or because they had nowhere else to go. Interviews took place in public areas and lasted about 20 minutes. Participants received a \$5 Kum & Go gift card (funded by Mercy Hospital) as a thank you for their time. After the project was explained including its voluntary nature, and risks and benefits, informed consent was obtained verbally. To prevent participant duplication, volunteers wore a unique sticker visible to others on the outside of their clothing. In addition, every volunteer asked potential participants: "Have you already been interviewed by someone wearing a sticker like the one I am wearing?" As another strategy to reduce duplication, participants provided a unique participant code; the first letter of their first name and first three letters of their last name. The code was written on the questionnaire and used to track each interview and gift card distribution. At the end of every project day, library staff emailed participant codes to project coordinators. Coordinators updated participant code lists that were distributed to volunteers previous to their interview shift. Volunteers verified the participant's code against previously collected codes before proceeding with the interview. Even so, three participants were interviewed twice. Data from duplicate interviews was deleted, leaving 97 for analysis.

No identifying information was collected from participants. Completed questionnaires were returned to the library, placed in an envelope, and kept with library staff in a secured location. The envelope was collected by the project coordinators once the 100th participant was interviewed.

Instrument and Measures

The semi-structured interview consisted of 37 quantitative and 23 open ended questions. Expanding on a survey developed by the Sioux City Police Department, (Appendix A) questionnaire themes (Appendix B) focused on demographic information, sleeping arrangements, housing, sources of income, substance use, mental health, involvement with law enforcement, interactions with local business, perspectives on their current situation, and individual strengths.

Findings

Demographics. The majority of participants identified themselves as Native American (47%) and male (71%). Participant mean age was 43.94 (SD 10.99) ranging from 18-65 years old. Thirty five percent were in the 40-49 age group. Regarding gender, 71% self-identified as male, 26% as female, 1 as transgender, and 1 chose not to identify a gender. Forty-seven percent of participants identified as American Indian/Alaskan Native, 30% as White/Caucasian, 11% as African American/Black, 5% as Hispanic/Latino, and 5% as Multiracial or other. Thirteen participants

had served in the military. Of those, four acquired a disability while in service. See Table 1 for more information.

Table 1. SSP Participant Demographic Data

Variable	n	%
Age - Mean: 43.94, \pm SD 10.99, Range 18-65	96	
18-29	13	13.5%
30-39	16	16.7%
40-49	35	36.5%
50-59	26	27.1%
60-65	6	6.3%
Sex	97	
Male	69	71.1%
Female	26	26.8%
Transgender	1	1.0%
Other	1	1.0%
Ethnicity	96	
American Indian/Alaskan Native	46	47.4%
White/Caucasian	29	29.9%
African American/Black	11	11.3%
Hispanic/Latino	5	5.2%
Multiracial/Other	5	5.2%
Served in Military	96	
No	84	86.5%
Yes	13	13.5%
Military Branch, if served	13	
Army	6	
Navy	3	
Marines	2	
Other	2	
Disability Acquired in Military		
Yes	4	
No	9	

Housing Status and Sleeping and Daytime Locations. When asked to describe their current living situation, ten people were housed, renting apartments or rooms, or living with family. Most said they were homeless. Many said the situation was bad and that they were “pitiful and poor.” Seventy-seven percent of participants were staying in a shelter at the time of their interview. When asked how many days they had been in a shelter in the last week, the mean was 6.05 (SD=1.72). Twenty-three percent of those in a shelter felt they would leave the shelter in less than a month, 20% were planning to stay until the (Warming) shelter closed, nearly 19% until their housing assistance came through. Close to 10% were planning to leave in one to three months, 8% when the weather got warm, and 5% when they found employment.

Participants staying in a shelter were primarily at the Warming Shelter. About 10% of those not in shelters were staying on the street, under the bridge, in stairways, and other unstable sleeping areas. One interviewee said she knew of at least 20 people who slept under the bridge, at the park, or at the bus station. Six people indicated they were staying with family and friends, “moving around.” A few were living at Bridges West and were very satisfied.

The vast majority felt they had a stable place to sleep (83%), though when asked about it, most said that they were referring to having a bed/spot in a shelter. In the words of one participant, “At least I can be off the street at night.” Nearly 47% said it was easy to find a place to sleep, 25% said it was somewhat easy, and 27% said it was difficult. When asked about these responses, most interviewed described the check-in process they used to secure a shelter bed, including checking in at the Warming Shelter at 4, 6, and 8 pm. Then they could come and go until turning in for the night. These answers bore out when participants were asked about how many hours they spent looking for a place to sleep. Nearly 42% said they spent less than one hour (though they did not count the time they needed to schedule for the shelter check in process), 36% spent 1-6 hours looking, and almost 20% said they spent more than 6 hours looking for a place to sleep.

In terms of satisfaction regarding where they currently slept, 37.5% were very satisfied, 36.5% were somewhat satisfied, 6% were neutral, 9% were unsatisfied, and 10% were very unsatisfied. When asked about their satisfaction in general, concerning Sioux City resources for people who need a place to sleep, 39.6% were very unsatisfied. 11.5 % were somewhat unsatisfied, 12.5% were neutral, 29.2% were somewhat satisfied, and 7.3% were very satisfied.

Several mentioned the Warming Shelter being warm, caring, helpful, open to all, but also crowded, dirty, and unsafe, particularly because they allow people who are high and/or intoxicated to stay there. Belongings are often stolen, including medication, and fights break out. A few participants were especially concerned about the safety of children and families there. There was a sense that the Warming Shelter was extremely necessary in Sioux City, but needed more rules and structure. One participant said “It’s loud, there are bugs, and stuff goes down there. But I have a roof over my head. How can I not be satisfied?” He echoed what in the larger group was an acceptance of the conditions in which they found themselves, “because it is reality,” and “at least it’s something.”

On the other hand, a great many participants thought the Gospel Mission had too many rules (particularly around requiring certain religious practices). They felt a lack of respect from program staff. As one man said, “They make homeless people feel worse by treating them badly. They should be inspiring and uplifting.

Table 2. SSP Participant Housing Status and Sleeping and Daytime Locations

Variable	n	%
Currently in a Shelter	96	
Yes	74	77.1%
No	21	22.9%
Days in Shelter in Last Week - Mean: 6.05, ±SD 1.7, Median: 7, Range 1-7	74	
Projected When Will Leave Shelter	74	
Less than a month	23	31.1%
Until they close	20	27.0%
Until housing comes through	14	18.9%
1-3 months	7	9.5%
When weather gets warm	6	8.1%
Until employment	4	5.4%
Feel Has a Stable Place to Sleep	96	
Yes	80	83.3%
No	16	16.7%
Ease of Finding Stable Place to Sleep	96	
Easy	45	46.9%
Somewhat easy	24	25.0%
Difficult	26	27.1%
Time Spent Looking for Place to Sleep	97	
Less than an hour	30	41.7%
1-3 hours	15	20.8%
4-6 hours	11	15.3%
More than 6 hours	14	19.7%
N/A	27	27.8%
Satisfaction With Current Place to Sleep	96	
Very satisfied	36	37.5%
Somewhat satisfied	35	36.5%
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	6	6.3%
Somewhat unsatisfied	9	9.4%
Very unsatisfied	10	10.4%
Satisfaction with Places to Sleep in Sioux City	96	
Very satisfied	7	7.3%
Somewhat satisfied	28	29.2%
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	12	12.5%
Somewhat unsatisfied	11	11.5%
Very unsatisfied	38	39.6%
Does Where Time Spent During Day Meet Needs	93	
Yes	58	62.4%
No	35	37.6%
Satisfaction with Places to Live in Sioux City	96	
Very satisfied	15	15.6%
Somewhat satisfied	16	16.7%
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	13	13.5%
Somewhat unsatisfied	13	13.5%
Very unsatisfied	39	40.6%

They (homeless people) are trying to find help and answers to questions.” A few welcomed that structure, saying it made for a less chaotic environment in which they did not have to worry about conditions such as those at the Warming Shelter. One participant commented about the dichotomy between shelters, “The Mission has a good idea (rules), but can be rigid; the Warming Shelter has no rules, and is wide open.” For the LGBT participants interviewed, both shelters were unwelcoming and sources of danger and harassment.

There was strong concern about what would happen once the Warming Shelter closed for the spring, and many of those interviewed said Sioux City needed another year-round shelter that was less restrictive than the Gospel Mission and able to serve more people. A woman in her 50’s, homeless for a few months, said she was worried about sleeping under the bridge because she didn’t know how she would navigate the rocks to get to the sleeping area, and then said, “And, you know” leaving the impression that she was also worried about her personal safety and possibly being sexually assaulted.

Sixty two percent of participants said where they currently spent their days met their needs. Many described a daily schedule in which they had to leave the Warming Shelter at 8 am, then went to the bus station to stay warm until the Wilbur Aalfs Library opened at 9 am. At approximately 11:30, they left the library to get lunch at the Gospel Mission. Then it was back to the library or perhaps the Hard Rock Casino until it was 4 pm and time to check in at the Warming Shelter. Spending time at the library and “walking around” were mentioned the most. A few said they spent the days with family and friends, at appointments, at the 4 Directions Center or the Ponca Tribe of Nebraska’s office. Sixteen said they were working or looking for work, and just a handful said they spent the day at the Hard Rock Casino or drinking. Many said they would like a place where they could stay during the day, with or without other services. See Table 2 for more information. Concerning Sioux City resources in general for people who needed a place to live, 40.5% were very unsatisfied, 13.5% were somewhat unsatisfied, 13.5% were neutral, 16.7% were somewhat satisfied, and 15.6% were very satisfied.

Services Desired. When asked if they would be interested in various services (yes/no), the services of primary interest were transportation (69.5%), funding or financial assistance (64.9%), rental/housing help (62.9%), help with finding employment (62.9%), and job training or educational advancement (59.4%). However, nearly half of the group were interested in help with medical issues/health insurance and mental health, more than one third desired legal help and assistance with substance use and addiction. Less than 25% wanted help with parenting or reclaiming parental rights, reflective of the number interviewed who did not have children, whose children were grown, or who were resigned to the fact that they would not be able to parent their children. Participants revealed more context regarding some items, as described below:

- **Transportation** was a barrier to employment and taking care of mental health and

Table 3. SSP Participant Services Desired

Services Desired (yes)	n	%
Transportation	95	69.5%
Funding/financial assistance	97	64.9%
Rental/housing	97	62.9%
Help with finding employment	97	62.9%
Job training or educational advancement	96	59.4%
Medical/health insurance help	97	46.4%
Mental health	96	45.8%
Legal	97	37.1%
Substance use/addiction	96	36.5%
Related to parenting	97	24.7%

substance abuse issues. Many suggested the City of Sioux City provide bus passes to homeless people.

- **Funding or financial assistance** was most often mentioned relating to needing deposits for housing rental or utility contracts, or for paying for substance abuse treatment, IDs, and the like. One participant said, “If you can get housing, you need \$1000, and people expect (everyone) to have that. You’re almost defeated before you begin.”
- **Rental/housing** was seen as unaffordable and extremely difficult to access. The majority, when given any choice of housing, wanted an apartment, with 15 specifying a 1 BR or efficiency. Thirty-five with families, desired a house. Several described a complex housing assistance process with a long waiting list requiring a 6+ month work history, a higher level of income than before, extensive paperwork requiring hard to gather information, affordable housing stock in deplorable conditions, with little enforcement of housing codes. One participant said, “When I was working, they changed policy about working 6+ months to be eligible for housing. For those just starting out, makes it hard to get a strong chance.” Another said, “They don’t have any (affordable housing). Not enough rentals or people who accept Section 8. The people who have Section 8 (housing) are crooked. Landlords take advantage of people. They don’t fix the housing, then when tenants refuse to pay rent because of the problems, the tenants are evicted and considered at fault. (And then have a bad reference).”
- **Job training or educational advancement** was desired by many and currently pursued by some participants. One was finishing her GED and planning to take classes at Western Iowa Tech Community College. Another was enrolled in a welding course. Still another had a CNA certificate and was hoping to advance in the medical field. All felt it was extremely difficult to pursue higher education while being homeless.

See Table 3 for more information.

Work and Financial Status. Of 96 who responded to the question regarding job status, 21.9% (21) indicated they had employment. Seven worked full-time, five part-time, and nine worked for a staffing agency or in seasonal/day labor. More than half of those employed were satisfied with their current job status, four were neutral, and six were unsatisfied. When asked how much money they earned or received each week, 37.5% said they had no money at all, 17.7% had only \$1-\$50 a week, 27.1% had \$51-\$250 each week, and 17.7% had \$251 or more. Those who had \$251+ each week received SSDI or similar

Table 4. SSP Participant Work and Financial Status

Variable	n	%
Current job status (if employed)	21	
Full time	7	33.3%
Part-time	5	23.8%
Temporary/staffing agency	6	28.6%
Seasonal/day labor	3	14.3%
Satisfied with current job status (if employed)	21	
Yes	11	52.4%
Neither satisfied nor unsatisfied	4	19.0%
No	6	28.6%
Money Received Each Week (in dollars) Mean: 122.13, ±SD 174.03, Median: 50, Range 0-800	96	
0	36	37.5%
1-50	17	17.7%
51-150	14	14.6%
151-250	12	12.5%
251-350	8	8.3%
351+	9	9.4%
Money received each week is adequate	94	
Yes	21	22.3%
Sometimes	6	6.4%
No	54	57.4%
Prefer not to answer	3	3.2%

sources of monthly income. Not surprisingly, 57.4% said the money they had each week was inadequate. Six (6.4%) said it was sometimes adequate (especially at the beginning of the month after receiving a check), and 22.3% said it was adequate. When asked more about income source(s), 15 received income from working and 15 SSI/SSDI. Several mentioned that temporary staffing agencies took too much out of their paychecks. Ten said they panhandled. Money from family and friends, SNAP and EBT benefits, recycling, tribal funds, and selling plasma were the next biggest categories. Employment barriers included transportation, disability, mental health or substance abuse issues, racism, and criminal records. Being homeless was also mentioned as a barrier. “(With) no home of my own, I fail to meet the needs of properly preparing to work ... I want to sleep in a house with an alarm so I can get up for work.” See Table 4 for more information.

Table 5. SSP Health and Mental Health Needs

Variable	n	%
Currently Have Medical Insurance (yes)	96	68.8%
Type of health insurance	67	
Medicaid	43	64.2%
Indian Health Services	11	16.4%
Medicare	4	6.0%
Hawk-I	3	4.5%
VA	2	3.0%
Employer-provided/private-pay	2	3.0%
Other	2	3.0%
Know about the Affordable Care Act	97	
Yes	54	55.7%
No	21	21.6%
Not Applicable	22	22.7%
Applied for Affordable Care Act coverage	97	
Yes	46	47.4%
No	27	27.8%
Not Applicable/Prefer not to answer	24	24.7%
Have Mental Health Diagnosis (yes)	96	34.4%
Currently involved with mental health services	97	
Yes	24	24.7%
No	31	32.0%
Not applicable	38	39.2%
Prefer not to answer	4	4.1%
Can adequately access mental health services	97	
Yes	58	59.8%
Sometimes	7	7.2%
No	19	19.6%
Not applicable	6	6.2%
Prefer not to answer	7	7.2%
Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) Interfere Daily	97	
Yes	21	21.6%
Sometimes	18	18.6%
No	58	59.8%
Currently involved in AOD services	96	
Yes	15	15.6%
Sometimes	6	6.3%
No	71	74%
Not applicable	2	2.1%
Prefer not to answer	2	2.1%
Can adequately access AOD services	96	
Yes	66	68.8%
Sometimes	9	9.4%
No	13	13.5%
Not applicable	6	6.3%
Prefer not to answer	2	2.1%

Medical Service/Health Insurance Access and Need. Almost 70% of those interviewed said they had medical insurance. When asked what type, 64.2% had Medicaid coverage. The next biggest group (16.4%) had Indian Health Services care. Other coverage held by 3-6% of the group were Medicare, Hawk-I, VA, employer-provided, and other. Nearly 56% were aware of Affordable Care Act (ACA) healthcare resources, 21.6% were unaware, and 22.7% said it was not applicable to them. More than 47% had applied for ACA coverage, 27.8% had not applied, and 24.7% said it did not apply to them, or preferred not to answer. Some described needing medical services such as blood pressure management, “fixing my knee”, and other issues. Several had worked in physically demanding jobs and now could not because of health and disability issues.

Mental Health Access and Needs. More than one third (34.4%) said they had a mental health diagnosis. 71.2% said they did not, it was not applicable, or they preferred not to answer. Nearly one quarter were currently involved in mental health services, with the remainder indicating they were not, it was not applicable, or they preferred not to answer. Almost 60% said that they could adequately access mental health services, while 7.2% could sometimes, and 19.6% said they could not.

Some respondents thought mental health needs could be better met by providing outreach to people on the streets and in shelters, especially in terms of helping people navigate complex systems, reducing stigma, and flexibility in service scheduling. One said services should be “in the loop” area. Medication is often stolen at shelters, making compliance and management difficult. One participant felt that an outreach program would help, because, “If your basic needs are not being met, it’s harder for everything to be met. (We) need a program, instead of putting people who need immediate assistance at the hospital. The hospital doesn’t want you there ... An on-call person would be great.” Some of the participants said their own mental health needs were concerning, including the chronically high stress from being homeless. They described issues with depression and suicidal thoughts. However, most participants were concerned about being a target for others having mental health problems.

Substance Abuse Treatment Access and Needs. Regarding the use of alcohol and other drugs (AOD), 21.6% said substance use interfered with daily life. Nearly 60% said it did not, and 18.6% said it was sometimes an issue. Almost three quarters of the group said they were not involved in AOD services, 15.6% said they were currently, and 6.3% said sometimes they accessed services (which included AA meetings). Almost 70% felt they could access AOD services, 13.5% said they could not, and 9.4% said they could sometimes access services. See Table 5 for more information.

Substance use/addiction services described as helpful were similar to those regarding mental health. Having more services, better access and help in paying for services, shorter waiting lists, outreach from staff and counselors, and knowing where to go and how to navigate the system were mentioned most often. Some respondents wanted a substance abuse center specifically for Native Americans including a detox center. Detox in general was a theme, with one respondent saying he purposefully got drunk, then arrested, because he felt he would then be taken to detox. Many participants felt that they did not have a substance use/addiction problem. Others were in recovery, but worried about relapse, especially with being homeless. One participant said he “needed someplace safe to go” after leaving treatment. Some knew they needed to quit drinking. Others were using but did not have current plans to quit, saying they knew where help was when they wanted it. Many were concerned about other people when they were under the influence, whether it was at the Warming Shelter or on the streets, “(I) have been around people who are using and not knowing how they can react is scary; they start yelling ... better to stay away.”

Arrest Experiences. More than 85% of participants had been arrested at least one time. Almost 20% had been arrested in the last 30 days, 14.8% in the last 90 days, 22.2% in the last year, and 43.2% had been arrested more than a year ago. When asked how bothersome being arrested was, 44.2% were bothered a lot and 28.4% were bothered a little or not at all.

Thirty four respondents said their last arrest had been for public intoxication, nine for drug charges, eight for assault, eight for fighting/disorderly conduct and six for a DUI. The remainder fell into various categories. Regarding their arrest experience, many said it went “okay” with police

officers treating them respectfully. Eleven felt they were treated disrespectfully, and seven said they were “roughed up.” Many said the experience was stressful, boring, or took a long time. Nine said they deserved the arrest and four said the experience was life changing for the positive. Five with public intoxication charges weren’t ruffled by the experience saying they sobered up and got out, with two saying they couldn’t remember the arrest. Several felt they were discriminated against because they were Native Americans. They thought they were more likely to be “rounded up” if they were with other Native Americans.

Table 6. SSP Arrest Experiences

Variable	n	%
Been Arrested Before (yes)	96	85.4%
Time since last arrest	81	
30 days or less	16	19.8%
31-90 days	12	14.8%
91-180 days	4	4.9%
181 days - 1 year	14	17.3%
More than a year	35	43.2%
How bothersome is being arrested	95	
A lot	42	44.2%
Some	8	8.4%
Don’t really know	5	5.3%
A little	11	11.6%
Not at all	16	16.8%
Not applicable	11	11.6%
Prefer not to answer	2	2.1%

When asked how much being arrested bothered them, respondents said they didn’t like the impact on their friends and families, the embarrassment and shame, and the loss of freedom. Some described the impact on their credit history and job prospects, “(You’re) more in debt, ruins credit, can’t pay bills or fines.” Several that were jailed for public intoxication were sad about how relapse can lead to jail, “Nobody likes to be arrested. (I) feel embarrassed that I was even in a situation to be arrested. I’m usually an upstanding guy. Every once in a while I have a relapse and I wish I wouldn’t end up in jail.” He felt that there should be a detox center where people who were drunk could go, not jail. Then if someone ended up at the detox center more than three times in one month, then they should get a ticket and go to jail. On the other hand, one man said he sometimes got arrested on purpose because, “If I need rest, I go to jail. If I’m in jail, I can’t get arrested again. Gives me time to think. I don’t get arrested for anything bad.” See Table 6 for more information.

Treatment from Downtown Businesses and Satisfaction with Sleeping and Living Resources. Almost 47% of participants felt they were treated very well or pretty well by downtown businesses. One quarter said they couldn’t really say, and 28.1% said they were treated somewhat or very badly.

When asked for more detail, 14 people said they found downtown Sioux City businesses to be friendly (“I walk in and they welcome me, asking what I need.”) and 15 felt they were treated okay. Walgreens, Subway, and the library, were all mentioned as being friendly spaces. One participant said, “(I’ve had) no problems with them. It’s one of the cleanest downtowns I’ve seen.”

However, 26 people said downtown businesses had treated them rudely or “looked down on” them; ten had been told to “go away.” One said, “When you go into some places, like the bank, people look down at you. So then you feel uncomfortable and not welcome.” Native American and other people of color said they experienced and/or witnessed discrimination. “Because of who I am, they think I’m going to bother people, but I’m just walking through. It has to do with being

Native American and with being poor.” “(I) see a lot of people look down at the different races. Black, Somalian guys get snubbed by the suits. Look at us like the gum stuck on their shoe.”

Table 7. SSP Treatment from Downtown Businesses

Variable	n	%
How Treated by (Downtown) Sioux City Businesses	96	
Very well	14	14.6%
Pretty well	31	32.3%
Can't really say	24	25%
Somewhat badly	17	17.7%
Very badly	10	10.4%

Some were “told to leave when just walking by.” One man took his grandchildren and daughter to eat at a downtown restaurant and was told to leave. Said one woman, “(It’s hard to) keep your spirits up so you don’t feel like nothing; you’re kicked out of here, you’re kicked out of there.” Many

mentioned “the rules” of being homeless, specifically or obliquely. “You’re okay as long as you follow the rules.” “I don’t live/look like a homeless person, so (I’m) not treated that way. If they know you are homeless, they treat you badly.” “If you fall asleep, you’re kicked out, no matter the temperature. You’re not supposed to eat in the library, and (I) got in trouble. The bus depot got snooty until someone set them straight. There should be more understanding; I know it’s hard for them. It’s a place of business and all that.” This treatment was particularly galling for some, considering the wealth they perceived in the neighborhood. “Business owners don’t care about us; across from us is a bank. There’s a casino, there’s a lot of money being made. Why not help some of us who really want help?” Several participants said they just avoided the downtown area as much as they could. See Table 7 for more information.

Desire to Change Current Situation. More than two thirds of participants wanted to change their current situation. One quarter of participants did not, and 6.3% preferred not to answer.

Twenty-eight desired housing, 22 wanted to be employed, nine wanted to stop using alcohol or drugs, seven wanted to improve their relationships, and others mentioned things concerning stability and improving their lives. “(I want to) have a job, a place to live, and not be scared to death every day.” A few wanted to leave Sioux City.

Table 8. SSP Desire to Change Current Situation

Want to Make Changes to Current Situation	n	%
Yes	65	68.4%
No	24	25.3%
Prefer not to answer	6	6.3%

When asked what they needed to be successful in life, 42 said they needed a job, 34 a place to live, 21 transportation, 18 improved relationships with friends and family, 13 treatment for substance abuse, 13 “to be a better person” and 7 education. Two typical lists included: “a job; a permanent address; my child back in my custody” and “work; steady shelter or apartment; good support systems.” See Table 8 for more information.

Recommendations for the City of Sioux City. Creating affordable and accessible housing was the primary recommendation. Several participants mentioned that downtown buildings seemed empty (above the second floor). They thought developing affordable housing in the downtown area would also allow them better access to services. The second strongest desire was for the City and business community to respect, communicate with, and better understand homeless and very poor people. Many participants were doubtful as to whether the City really cared about their lives or would take meaningful action. Other recommendations included:

- Establish a year-round shelter with services AND structure. This is especially important given the recent increase in homeless people in Sioux City. Consider turning the YMCA into a shelter with one-stop shopping for services including education and job training. Day time hours are a must.
- Increase social work outreach services to people on streets and in public spaces.
- Provide bus passes to homeless people.
- Change public intoxication laws and have a detox center and continuum of related services to support sobriety.
- Support living wage job creation and job readiness/job finding services.
- Address racism, and discrimination toward LGBTQ people in public/private spaces and services.
- Decrease talk, increase action; Increase awareness of homeless and poor people as people.

Know Us.

The final question, asking participants what they were proud of was revealing, and instructive. Many listed special skills they had including being: a CNA, a beautician, a truck driver, a diesel mechanic, a carpenter, a fantastic cook, great with children, and a “track star with a 4:30 mile.” They were proud of their families and family roles, “I love my kids and my grandkids,” “I raised my kids all by myself. All six of them.” They were proud of helping others “I’m willing to give the shirt off my back. I do things quietly and don’t need to be acknowledged.” Helping others included helping others survive while being homeless, “I know how to show people how to survive.” They spoke of their generosity, their intelligence “I graduated with a 3.87,” “I graduated with a 4.0 with a two year old when I was in high school and then had two college scholarships.” “I have multiple degrees.” and most of all, their character “I always keep my word and do what I say I would do; my word is good.” and “I love people and love to be friendly. It only takes one good person to change the world. I make a person smile daily.”

They were proud of serving in the military, maintaining sobriety, expressing their identity whether it was as a Native American, someone who is transgender, or simply “living as a whole person.” One participant said their strengths, as a group, could be an asset to the City of Sioux City, *if* the City was interested “(They should) reconsider their thought process; get an understanding of what it’s like to be homeless. They pour so much money into other things. If they put more money into homeless work, they wouldn’t turn to so many drugs, etc. Pay more attention to that, and then that would benefit the city in the end. Deal with the conditions that lead to homelessness so that you can prevent it. Be more positive about what we (homeless people) can do. Don’t criticize so much. Get to know the people. Don’t judge them. Find what’s right with them.”

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For more information, please contact:

Julia Kleinschmit, BJ, MSW, CSW

Clinical Associate Professor and MSW Program Director

University of Iowa School of Social Work

julia-kleinschmit@uiowa.edu

Appendix A. Original Sioux City Police Department Questionnaire

Questionnaire

1. NAME (optional)? _____
2. WHERE DO YOU SLEEP? _____
3. HOW DO YOU GET MONEY (i.e. Social Security, Veteran's Benefits, Unemployment, Food Assistance, Collect cans, Odd Jobs etc.)?
 - a. FROM WHOM? _____
 - b. HOW MUCH? _____
4. DO YOU HAVE ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE? Yes No
 - a. WHAT TYPE? _____
5. DO YOU EVER ASK FOR MONEY FROM PEOPLE ON THE STREET? Yes No
 - a. WHAT METHOD DO YOU USE? _____

 - b. HOW MUCH DO YOU NORMALLY GET PER DAY? _____
 - c. WHAT DO YOU USE THE MONEY FOR? _____
6. DO YOU WANT A JOB? _____
7. DOES IT BOTHER YOU TO GET ARRESTED (EXPLAIN)? _____

8. IF THERE WERE 3 THINGS WE COULD PROVIDE TO IMPROVE YOUR SITUATION, WHAT WOULD THEY BE? _____

Appendix B. Siouxland Street Project Final Questionnaire

Hi, my name is _____ I am a volunteer with the University of Iowa and Briar Cliff University. I would like to interview you about your experiences. The questions I ask will refer to where you sleep, sources of income, and other life circumstances that you may have had. First I need to ask:

Have you already been interviewed by someone wearing a sticker like the one I am wearing?

(If the participant answers YES or does NOT want to participate, thank them for their time and end the survey.)

- The interview should take about 20 minutes of your time. Once the interview is complete, I will provide you with a \$5 Kum & Go card
- This interview is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any questions if you do not wish to
- You may withdraw information you provided to me at anytime during the interview
- During the interview, you may find that you would like to skip a question or stop the interview, which is okay to do
- The information you share with me is completely confidential. I will not ask you to sign your name to anything nor will I ask any identifying information
- The information you share with me will be used to help service providers in Sioux City better understand your circumstances and how services can be most helpful to you.

If you would like to participate in the interview I will need the 1st letter of your **FIRST** name and the first 3 letters of your **LAST** name in order to track that I gave out a \$5 Kum & Go card.

PARTICIPANT CODE (Place on top of page):

1 st letter of FIRST name	<input type="text"/>	First 3 letters of LAST name	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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Do you have any questions about your participation in the interview?

NO: Okay, if at any point you have questions during the interview, please feel free to stop me so I can answer them for you. And remember, you may skip any questions you are not comfortable answering and may stop the interview any time you like.

YES: Answer any questions the participants may have and then follow the prompt:

Okay, if you do not have any more questions then I will proceed with the interview. If at any point you have questions during the interview, please feel free to stop me so I can answer them for you. And remember, you may skip any questions you are not comfortable answering and may stop the interview any time you like.

DO NOT LEAVE BLANK SPACES. INDICATE "DC" IF DECLINED TO ANSWER

*First I would like to ask you some general **demographic** question*

1. May I ask your age?
_____Years Prefer not to answer

2. How would you identify your gender?
 Female Male Transgender Other Prefer not to answer

3. Which ethnicity do you identify with?
 Black/African American

 Hispanic or Latino/a

 White/Caucasian

 Native American/Alaska Native

 Asian/ Pacific Islander

 Multiracial /Other

 Prefer not to answer/Do not know

4. Have you ever served in the military?
 Yes No (**Skip to #7**) Prefer not to answer (**Skip to #7**)

5. Branch of the military? _____

6. Do you have a disability that you acquired during you time in the military?
 Yes No Prefer not to answer/Do not know

*The next sets of questions are related to **housing** arrangements and where you **sleep**.*

7. How would you describe your current living situation?

8. Are you currently staying in a shelter? (Such as, the warming shelter, the gospel mission, etc.)
 Yes No (**Skip to # 11**) Prefer not to answer (**Skip to # 11**)

9. If so, how many days in the last 7 days week have you stayed in a shelter? # of days

10. How long do you plan on staying at the shelter?

(Through winter, until housing comes through, etc.)

11. Do you feel that you have a stable place to sleep at night?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

12. Could you tell me about where it is you sleep at night? (Write answer in box below)

13. What is your level of ease with finding a place to sleep at night?

Easy

Somewhat easy

Difficult

14. Approximately, how much time a day do you think you spend looking for a place to sleep?

N/A Less than an hour

1-3 hours

4-6 hours

+6 hours

15. Are you satisfied with where you sleep at night?

Very Satisfied

Somewhat Satisfied

Neither Satisfied nor Unsatisfied

Somewhat Unsatisfied

Very Unsatisfied

16. What is **satisfying** or **unsatisfying** to you about where you sleep?

17. Could you tell me about where you spend the majority of your time during the day?

Examples: my house/apartment, shelter, the Westside, on 4th St., at friends house, etc.

18. Do you feel that where you spend your time during the day meets your needs?

Yes

No

Prefer not to answer

19. If you could choose, which kind of housing would you have?

20. What are some resources or services that you feel could be helpful to you? (**Choose most applicable or specify other**)

a) Employment (help finding employment, job search, not enough hours/money)* Not employed prompt?
 Yes No

b) Training for a job/learning a new skill or trade, education advancement (getting a GED)
 Yes No

c) Mental health services (lack of insurance, no access to services, disability)
 Yes No

d) Services to help with substance use/addiction concerns (treatment, transportation to meetings/groups)
 Yes No

e) Medical help (lack of insurance, no access to services/specialty services/prescriptions, injury, disability related to a medical or health concern)
 Yes No

f) Legal help (having a felony, returning from jail or prison)
 Yes No

g) Help related to parenting (Child care or reuniting with child(ren), other parenting skills)
 Yes No

h) Rental assistance (HUD, rent subsidy, transitional housing)
 Yes No

i) Funding assistance for other than rent (down payment/deposits, utilities, financial assistance)
 Yes No

j) Transportation
 Yes No

k) Other, specify:

*The next set of questions I will ask about the **money** you may receive and **medical health coverage***

21. Do you receive money from a paying job?
 Yes No (**Skip to # 25**) Prefer not to answer/Do not know

22. What is your current job status?
 Full-time Part-time Seasonal or Day Labor
Temporary/staffing agency

23. Are you satisfied with the stability of your current job status?
 Yes (**Skip to # 25**) Neither satisfied or unsatisfied
 No

24. Could you tell me about the barriers you experience that prevent you from securing a stable job?

25. What are your (**other**) sources of money?
Examples: Disability, SSI, panhandling, recycling, child support, unemployment, etc.

26. How much money do you get each week? \$

27. Do you feel the money you receive each week is adequate enough to meet your needs?
 Yes Sometimes No Prefer not to answer

28. Do you currently have medical health insurance?
 Yes No (**Skip to # 30**) Prefer not to answer/Do not know

29. Which type of medical health insurance do you have? (**Check most applicable**)
 Veterans Administration Medical Services (VA benefits)

 Medicaid

 Medicare

 Employer provided health insurance

 Private pay health insurance (the participant or someone else pays their insurance premiums)

- Cobra
 - Other, Specify:
-

30. Did you know that you could get free medical health insurance through the Affordable Care Act?
 Yes No

31. Have you applied for health insurance?
 Yes (**Skip to # 32**) No* Prefer not to answer/Do not know*

**Would you like information on how to apply for health insurance? I will be sure to share that with at the end*

*Now I would like to ask you a few questions related to **mental health and substance use***

32. Do you have a mental health diagnosis?
 Yes No (**Skip to # 34**) Prefer not to answer/Do not know (**Skip to # 34**)

33. Are you currently involved with a service that helps with symptoms related to your mental health? (Outpatient counseling, medication management, visits with a doctor, etc.)
 Yes No Prefer not to answer/Do not know

34. Do you feel you are able to adequately access services that help with symptoms of mental health if needed? (Medications, counseling, follow-up care, etc.)
 Yes (**Skip to #36**) Sometimes No Prefer not to answer

35. What do you feel could be most helpful for yourself or others accessing services for mental health needs?

36. What concerns if any, do you have regarding your mental health or the mental health of others?

37. Does alcohol or drug use interfere with your routine tasks or daily living activities in some way?
 Yes Sometimes No Prefer not to answer

38. Are you currently involved with a service that helps to reduce or stop substance use? (Outpatient counseling, 12-step meetings, medications such as Suboxone, etc.)
 Yes Sometimes No Prefer not to answer

39. Do you feel you are able to adequately access services that help to reduce or stop substance use if needed? (Counseling, 12-step meetings, medications such as Suboxone, etc.)
 Yes Sometimes No Prefer not to answer

40. What do you feel could be helpful for yourself or others accessing services for substance use treatment?

41. What concerns if any, do you have regarding your substance use or the substance use of others?

*The final set of questions I will ask are related to your experiences with the **law enforcement, businesses, and your feelings** about what would be **most helpful to you***

42. How satisfied are you with the services that Sioux City offers for people that do not have a stable place to **sleep**?
 Very Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Neither Satisfied nor Unsatisfied
 Somewhat Unsatisfied Very Unsatisfied

43. Can you tell me about that; what is **satisfying** or **unsatisfying** to you?

44. How satisfied are you with the services that Sioux City offers for people that do not have a stable place to **live**?

- Very Satisfied Somewhat Satisfied Neither Satisfied nor Unsatisfied
 Somewhat Unsatisfied Very Unsatisfied

45. Can you tell me about what is satisfying or unsatisfying to you? (Write answer in box below)

46. How well are you treated by Sioux City businesses?

- Very well Pretty well Can't really say Somewhat badly Very badly

47. Can you expand on your experience has been with local businesses? (Write answer in box below)

48. Have you ever been arrested?

- Yes No (**Skip to # 52**) Prefer not to answer

49. How recent was your last arrest? (Choose best value based on participants response)

- # in days # in months # in years

50. What were you arrested for? (**Specify**)

51. Can you tell me about your experiences with being arrested?

52. In general, how much does it bother you to be arrested?

- A lot Some Don't Really Know A little Not at all Prefer not to

answer

53. What **does** or **does not** bother you about being arrested?

54. What are aspects of your situation that you enjoy?

55. Are there changes you would like to make to your current situation?

- Yes No (**Skip to # 57**) Prefer not to answer/Do not know

56. What are the changes you would like to make to your situation?

57. What are 3 things you would need to be successful?

58. What are some things that Sioux City officials could do that would be beneficial to you? (Write answer in box below)

