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Unhoused and Unhireable? Examining Employment Biases in Service Contexts Related to Perceived Warmth and Competence of People Experiencing Houselessness

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Abstract

Aims: Lack of safe and stable housing is a pernicious and growing social concern, and stereotypes about individuals experiencing houselessness are generally quite negative. Little scholarly work has examined housing insecurity, and its associated stereotypes in employment contexts. The purpose of the current research was to examine, in the context of the hospitality industry, whether housing status influences hiring managers' perceptions of hireability (Study 1), and customers' evaluations of an organization and its employees (Study 2) using the stereotype content model.

Methods: Across two experimental studies, we assessed participant attitudes toward individuals experiencing houselessness. In Study 1, we instructed 148 hotel managers to listen to a hypothetical job interview with either an unhoused or housed job applicant, and then complete measures of hireability. In Study 2, we instructed 139 hotel customers to observe a hypothetical interaction with either an unhoused or housed employee, and then evaluate the employee and the organization.

Results: Study 1's findings suggested an indirect effect of housing status on perceived hireability through warmth, and this indirect relationship was moderated by gender. Men who were houseless were rated lower in warmth, and thus lower in hireability, than non-houseless men or women regardless of their housing status. However, houseless men were perceived by customers as warmer than non-houseless men as employees, driving higher evaluations of the organization and the employee (Study 2).

Conclusion: Hiring initiatives targeted at providing short-term housing for unhoused employees will benefit employees, employers, and the larger communities they encompass.

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related to perceived warmth and competence of people experiencing houselessness

Social psychologists have devoted considerable effort to understand how stereotypes can negatively impact different aspects of people's lives. Much of this research focuses on stereotypes related to race, gender, and other dominant identities and characteristics. However, less is known about the harmful stereotypes associated with those who are experiencing, or have experienced, houselessness[1] (Marrone, 2005; Ratcliff et al., 1996), and how these stereotypes are harmful in employment contexts. Houselessness is experienced by a substantial, and growing, proportion of the U.S. population. Recent estimates suggest that there are as many as 567,715 individuals without secure housing on any given night in the U. S. (U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2019). Additionally, the economic disruption caused by COVID-19 is expected to increase the number of those experiencing houselessness for the first time (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2020). As such, houselessness is, and will continue to be a leading social concern that has negative implications, not only for specific individuals, but entire communities as well. Given that a safe home represents a physical and psychological necessity, fundamental to an individual achieving personal wellness and growth (Evans & Kim, 2013; Maslow, 1943, 1954), it stands to reason that not having access to stable and safe shelter is related to a litany of other pernicious individual, and social problems including poor health care, criminalization, and unemployment (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). In fact, unemployment rates among those experiencing houselessness is extremely high compared to those who are housed (Slesnick et al., 2018) signaling a pattern of exclusion from organizational recruitment and selection efforts.

Although data suggest an association between those experiencing houselessness and the likelihood of reduced employment, the possible antecedents, and reasons for this are extensive. Past research has mostly focused on more obvious and stereotypical characteristics of houseless individuals such as self-efficacy, substance use, and mental and physical disabilities (Brown & Mueller, 2014; Poremski et al., 2014, 2017; Zuvekas & Hill, 2000), or, at best, included structural factors such as characteristics of the labor market, poverty, and the housing market (Morrell-Bellai et al., 2000; Shier et al., 2012) as predictors of unemployment. However, less attention has been given to psychological barriers among employers that may impede individuals experiencing houselessness from gainful employment. For instance, there are many negative stereotypes about those who are houseless (Knecht & L. M. Martinez, 2009), particularly concerning men (Hocking & Lawrence, 2000), and it is still unclear how these stereotypes may influence hiring decisions. Indeed, hiring decisions, in of themselves, can act as a significant barrier to employment, with the results of qualitative studies suggesting that individuals experiencing houselessness are eliminated from the interview process altogether upon disclosure of housing status and history (Poremski et al., 2014, 2017).

The present research examines how stereotypes associated with houselessness and gender influence hiring decisions. Specifically, we utilize the stereotype content model (SCM; Fiske et al., 2002) to understand how stereotypes about individuals experiencing houselessness may contribute to a lack of access to gainful employment across two complementary studies of participants acting as hotel managers and hotel guests. We posit that job applicants who are unhoused, particularly men, will receive more negative hiring ratings compared to job applicants who are housed. We also suggest that customer perceptions of individuals who are unhoused will be different from those of hiring managers. We chose the hotel industry as the context for this

research because it routinely offers an extensive range of accessible entry-level positions for individuals seeking gainful employment, thus providing a feasible setting for examining perceived bias and hireability. Furthermore, many of those positions are customer-facing, providing the opportunity to go beyond the hiring stage, and probe customers' perceptions of houseless employees, and the organizations that employ them. Finally, since the hotel industry is well-positioned to provide both employment and short-term housing solutions for new employees, it provides a context within which there are obvious and actionable implications for providing employment for houseless applicants.

This work makes a number of contributions to the existing literature and has important implications for organizational and community initiatives related to housing. First, it extends the SCM to a novel sample and situation. Previously, individuals experiencing houselessness have merely been classified within the SCM (low competence/low warmth; Fiske et al., 2002). Our study is the first to examine how this classification contributes to unfair bias and discrimination, specifically within hiring contexts. Second, our work examines perceptions of warmth and competence among different relevant perceivers (hiring managers and customers of the organization). By examining stereotypes across perceivers, we provide insight into how motives (hiring an employee vs. interacting with an employee) influence perceptions of warmth and competence. Third, the present research offers a new approach to understanding a growing social problem by addressing the barriers to gainful employment and the rising rates of houseless citizens. There are many perspectives from which to approach the housing crisis (e.g., public funding, public housing, community outreach). We hope our work offers a novel perspective to this growing body of literature. In the following sections, we develop the rationale for our hypotheses by discussing the intersection of housing and employment, contextualizing our work

within the SCM (Fiske, 2018; Fiske et al., 2002, 2007), and considering how target gender could impact the perceptions of houselessness.

Houselessness and Employment

In this study, we define someone experiencing houselessness as an individual who currently does not have a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2019). These individuals may experience houselessness for any number of reasons including loss of employment or residence, mental health complications, physical disability, poverty, and loss of social support (Peressini, 2007). Women in particular experience houselessness as a result of loss of employment, interpersonal conflict, abuse, and eviction (Tessler et al., 2001). Indeed, the leading causes of houselessness are lack of employment or affordable housing, having bills that exceed income, and general poverty (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). Thus, organizations may be in a unique place to provide employment to these individuals.

Employment, particularly gainful employment (i.e., steady employment and payment), is an important concern for those who are experiencing houselessness. Many experiencing houselessness report being employed in some capacity (Acuña & Erlenbusch, 2009; Shier et al., 2010), however these jobs are typically temporary, unstable, and/or low-paying, making it difficult for individuals to generate sufficient earnings to pay for the growing costs of housing (Zuvekas & Hill, 2000). Thus, for those without housing, gainful employment may facilitate finding permanent housing and contribute to improved mental health and wellbeing (Acuña & Erlenbusch, 2009; Aubry et al., 2012). As such, integrating individuals experiencing houselessness into the workplace is a focus of intervention work such as individual placement support, government assistance, and targeted hiring initiatives (Ferguson et al., 2012; Poremski

et al., 2017). Although these interventions appear promising, there are still numerous structural barriers that continue to prevent these individuals without housing from being able to acquire employment including lack of experience or education, physical or mental health disabilities, lack of access to reliable transportation, and challenges related to past incarceration or hospitalization (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2013; National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, 2014).

Although pervasive structural barriers interfere with the ability of individuals without housing to find gainful employment, perceived social barriers (e.g., common stereotypes, experiencing prejudice and discrimination) work in conjunction with structural barriers to prevent people from finding gainful employment (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2013). Disclosing housing status during an interview may lead to hiring discrimination, as it elicits prejudicial beliefs and stereotypes in hiring managers. Indeed, individuals who disclosed houselessness during an interview reported they were not hired by the organization and that, in some cases, the interviews abruptly ended following these disclosures (Poremski et al., 2014). Managers may hold implicit negative stereotypes and biases against those who are unhoused including the unfair and unsubstantiated perception that people choose to be unhoused because they are inherently lazy, irresponsible, unreliable, dangerous, and/or substance abusers (Knecht & L. M. Martinez, 2009). These negative stereotypes elicit perceptions that the job applicant would not be a responsible or reliable employee, undermining their likelihood of gaining employment. However, without a theoretical framework to organize these stereotypes, it is difficult to predict hiring outcomes for job applicants experiencing houselessness.

The SCM

The SCM (Fiske et al., 2002) is a useful framework for understanding and organizing stereotypes about various groups. This model distinguishes two orthogonal dimensions of stereotypes—perceptions of warmth and competence—which account for much of the variance in forming impressions of others (Wojciszke et al., 2009). Warmth is characterized by the perceived positive or negative intentions of others (i.e., being helpful or dangerous) and is typically measured by traits such as friendliness, sincerity, and kindness. Groups that are assumed to be low in warmth are seen as having incompatible goals, and therefore are a threat to resources. Competence is characterized by the perceived ability of others to achieve their intentions (i.e., are they capable of being helpful or dangerous), and is typically measured by traits such as intelligence, skill, confidence, and independence.

Together, warmth and competence form a two-dimensional grid on which social groups can be mapped as being relatively high in both warmth and competence, low in both warmth and competence, high in warmth but low in competence, and low in warmth but high in competence. A wealth of research has demonstrated how stereotypes (i.e., cognitions) related to perceived warmth and competence can subsequently impact discrimination (i.e., behaviors; see Cuddy et al., 2008; Fiske, 2018 for a review). For example, within the workplace, group-based perceptions of warmth and competence have been shown to have significant effects on hiring intentions (Cuddy et al., 2004, 2011; Lyons et al., 2018, Study 3; L. R. Martinez et al., 2016; Rudman & Glick, 1999), willingness to work with others in team settings (Lyons et al., 2018, Study 4), and customer service perceptions (Smith et al., 2016). Thus, in line with past research and theory, we expect that warmth and competence will both be positively related to the perceived hireability of job applicants:

Hypothesis 1: Perceived warmth (H1a) and competence (H1b) will be positively related to perceived hireability.

Conceptualizing Houselessness Within the SCM

Past research on stereotypes about "the homeless" suggest that these individuals are perceived as being low in both warmth and competence (i.e., they are perceived as being both untrustworthy, and unskilled; Fiske et al., 2002). First, those who are experiencing houselessness are often stereotyped as being violent, mentally unstable, and substance abusers (Buch & Harden, 2011; Hocking & Lawrence, 2000; Knecht & L. M. Martinez, 2009), often resulting in avoidance, harassment, or being arrested. Consequently, those who are experiencing houselessness are typically characterized as being low in warmth. According to the SCM, groups that are low in warmth are seen as being a threat such that they drain valuable resources from others with impunity. Indeed, people experiencing houselessness are perceived to be a threat to societal resources when thought to be misusing government funding and support (Dow, 2015), and committing crimes such as theft or assault (Amster, 2003; Snow et al., 1989). Moreover, houselessness is often thought to be controllable, such that individuals choose to remain unhoused and take advantage of free resources rather than finding employment (Knecht & L. M. Martinez, 2009).

Second, people who are experiencing houselessness can be characterized as being low in competence because of perceptions that they are unskilled, uneducated, lazy, and/or mentally ill (Buch & Harden, 2011; Hocking & Lawrence, 2000; Knecht & L. M. Martinez, 2009). According to the SCM, groups that are low in competence are perceived to be low in status and power. There is little community support for people experiencing houselessness (Harter et al., 2005), which is worsened by the risk of targeted violence and aggression (Allison & Klein, 2019;

Murray, 2011), the stressors of forced removal from neighborhoods (Kaufman, 2021), and ostracism (Carpenter-Song et al., 2016; Johnstone et al., 2015).

Using the SCM, it is possible to predict hiring outcomes among job applicants experiencing houselessness. Since people experiencing houselessness are likely to be perceived as being low in warmth and competence, both of which are positively related to hiring outcomes, it is likely that job applicants without housing will experience hiring discrimination. Therefore, we predict that warmth and competence will mediate the relationship between housing status and perceived hireability.

> *Hypothesis 2: There will be an indirect effect of housing status on perceived hireability through warmth and competence such that job applicants experiencing houselessness will score lower on perceived hireability (vs. applicants with housing) due to lower perceived warmth (2a) and competence (2b).*

The Moderating Role of Gender

Although we expect a perceived hireability disadvantage for applicants experiencing houselessness (vs. those who are not), we further suggest that this effect will be influenced by the applicant's gender. In general, men are stereotyped as being relatively high in competence and low in warmth, and women are stereotyped with the opposite pattern (Cuddy et al., 2008). In the case of men and women experiencing houselessness, one must consider potential workplace-related stereotypes from an intersectional approach. For instance, there are strong societal expectations that men (more so than women) should be gainfully employed such that they can provide resources (most notably, food and shelter) for (presumably female) spouses and/or children (Wood & Eagly, 2002). Because of these expectations, men who are unable to procure these resources for themselves, let alone for others, are likely to be perceived as being much

lower in competence than men who can procure these resources or than women who are not

stereotypically expected to provide resources for themselves and others (regardless of housing

status). Similarly, men experiencing houselessness are likely to be perceived as being especially

low in warmth, as their perceived drain on societal resources (discussed previously) signifies a

greater role violation than for women. Based on this rationale, we predict the following:

> *Hypothesis 3: Men experiencing houselessness will be rated lower in warmth (H3a) and*
>
> *competence (H3b) than men who are not and than women regardless of housing status.*
>
> *Hypothesis 4: There will be a conditional indirect effect of houselessness on perceived*
>
> *hireability such that men experiencing houselessness will be rated lower in perceived*
>
> *hireability than women experiencing houselessness due to perceptions of lower warmth*
>
> *(H4a) and competence (H4b).*

Study 1

Method

 Participants. We recruited a total of 863 individuals from Amazon's Mechanical Turk

(MTurk) in line with recommendations outlined by Feitosa and colleagues (2015). As this study

focused on employee selection contexts, potential participants were screened for inclusion using

Smith et al. 's (2015) method such that only individuals who had managerial experience in hotel

contexts ($n = 171$) were allowed to proceed with the study. Of these 171, we removed 23

participants due to careless responding and failure to pass manipulation checks, resulting in a

final sample of 148. The majority of participants reported that they were White/Caucasian (68%)

and 45% were women. The average age of the participants was 32.9 (SD = 10.9), and the

majority of participants reported working at their organizations for 1 - 3 years (33%), or 3 -5

years (22%). The two most common management positions reported were front desk manager (35%) and general manager (20%).

Procedure. At the onset of the study, we informed participants that they would be considering a hypothetical job applicant for a position at the front desk of a hotel. After consenting, they viewed the applicant's resume and listened to an audio recording of an interview, both of which we created for this study. Participants then provided ratings of the job applicant, including perceived warmth, competence, and hireability.

Experimental manipulations. This study used a 2 (housing status: houseless vs. non-houseless) × 2 (target gender: man vs. woman) between-subjects design. The resumes were completely identical across conditions and were standardized to reflect applicants that were adequately, but not exceptionally qualified, for a customer-facing, front desk position (to avoid floor or ceiling effects). All resumes included a gender-neutral name (Sam Baker) and none included a permanent address. The resume is presented in Appendix A. For the interviews, we created four audio recordings, which were identical in content except for the experimental manipulations. For housing status, the interviewer (always a man) mentions, toward the end of the interview, that he did not notice an address listed on the application materials and asks if this was an oversight. In the houseless condition, the job applicant replies by indicating that they do not currently have a permanent place of residence. In the non-houseless condition, the job applicant communicates that they do have a permanent address and that they simply forgot to list it on their resume. For gender, masculine and feminine voice actors (who identified as cisgender men and women, respectively) played the role of the job applicant. The full transcripts of the interviews are presented in Appendix B.

Measures. In all cases, participants indicated the extent to which they agreed with various scale items on a 7-point unipolar Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = "not at all agree" to 7 = "very strongly agree."

Warmth. Participants assessed the job applicant's *warmth* using four items adapted from Fiske et al. (2002). Specifically, they rated the extent to which they believed the applicant was: (a) warm, (b) sincere, (c) good-natured, and (d) tolerant. The scale demonstrated adequate reliability ($\alpha = .89$).

Competence. Participants assessed the job applicant's *competence* using five items from Fiske and colleagues' (2002) scale. Specifically, they rated the extent to which they believed the applicant was: (a) competent, (b) competitive, (c) intelligent, (d) confident, and (e) capable. The scale demonstrated adequate reliability ($\alpha = .90$).

Hireability. Participants assessed the perceived *hireability* of the applicant by responding to eight items adapted from both King and colleagues' (2006) and Madera and colleagues' (2009) studies. A sample item is "The candidate was a good fit for the position." The scale demonstrated adequate reliability ($\alpha = .89$).

Study 1 Results

See Table 1 for descriptive statistics and correlations between variables. We conducted a simple regression to test Hypothesis 1. In support of Hypothesis 1, both warmth and competence were significantly related to hireability, $b = 0.37$, SE $= 0.08$, $p < .001$, CI [0.24, 0.53], and $b = 0.56$, SE $= 0.09$, $p < .001$, CI [0.38, 0.73], respectively. To test Hypothesis 2, we conducted a test of mediation using Hayes' (2017) PROCESS macro (Model 4) in SPSS. We entered houselessness as the predictor, hireability as the outcome, and warmth and competence as parallel mediators. Results indicated there was no significant indirect effect for the total model, b

= -0.28, SE = 0.19, CI [-0.65, 0.08], warmth, b = -0.11, SE = 0.08, CI [-0.28, 0.05], or

competence, b =-0.17, SE = 0.12, CI [-0.42, 0.05]. Thus, neither Hypothesis 2a nor Hypothesis

2b were supported.

We conducted a test of moderated mediation to test Hypothesis 3 using Hayes' (2017)

PROCESS macro (Model 7) in SPSS. We entered houselessness as the predictor, hireability as

the outcome, warmth and competence as parallel mediators, and gender as a moderator on the

("A") path between houselessness and warmth/competence. Results revealed an interaction

between houselessness and gender on warmth, b = -0.94, SE = 0.44, p < .05, CI [-1.80, -0.7] such

that houseless men were rated as being less warm than all other conditions, in support of

Hypothesis 3a. There was no interaction for competence, b = -0.67, SE = 0.42, p = .11, CI [-1.48,

.014], thus Hypothesis 3b was not supported. There was a significant conditional indirect effect

of houselessness through warmth suggesting that men experiencing houselessness were rated as

being less warm than women experiencing houselessness, which resulted in lower hireability

ratings compared to women, b = -0.34, SE = 0.18, CI [-0.72, -0.03], in support of Hypothesis 4a.

Hypothesis 4b was not supported. Mean differences for the A path are displayed in Figure 1.

Study 1 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to use the SCM to understand the influence of stereotypes

of people experiencing houselessness on hiring decisions, while also accounting for gender

differences. The results of this study suggest that when considering applicants experiencing

houselessness, hiring managers may be less likely to hire men than women for a customer-facing

position due to lower perceptions of warmth.

This pattern of results lends support for the notion that men experiencing houselessness

may be particularly penalized for violating social norms related to masculinity. Specifically, the

fact that the effect was primarily driven by perceptions of warmth (and not competence) suggests that stereotypes of men experiencing houselessness are derived from a perceived intent to drain resources from society (through assistance programs) without remorse. These findings also support one of the basic tenets of the SCM: for interpersonal interactions in which individuals are meeting for the first time, perceptions of others' warmth often take cognitive precedence over perceptions of others' competence. They are also formed more quickly than perceptions of competence and have a greater impact on global evaluation of others (Fiske et al., 2007; Wojciszke et al., 1998; Wojciszke & Abele, 2008). Our findings are also in line with those of Smith et al. (2016), who found that warmth was particularly important for perceptions of hotel front desk employees. The observation that warmth is an important trait for customer-facing employees reflects the common practice among hospitality professionals to recruit individuals to customer-facing positions who are warm, friendly, and agreeable, because such positions demand a high degree of interpersonal skill, agreeableness, and social competence (Kusluvan et al., 2010).

Although these findings are meaningful, we also acknowledge that a central focus of performance, and a large determinant of fiscal success within a service-oriented environment such as a hotel, is customer satisfaction. One central distinction between managers and customers is that customer interactions with employees are much more fleeting and less personally reflective than those of managers. Managers often operate under the assumption that the employee is a direct reflection of their organization (Costen & Barrash, 2006; Kwok & Muñiz, 2021) and as such are likely to be concerned with perceived stigma around an employee's housing status. It would be reasonable to assume that customers holding any of the same negative stereotypes as hiring managers, would display similar negative reactions. If this

were the case, the bias against hiring individuals experiencing houselessness among managers may be somewhat justified from a purely business perspective because negative customer perceptions could have a consequential negative impact on hotel performance. However, customers may not be as critical as hiring managers of an employee's housing status due to the fleeting nature of their interactions and larger social distance (compared to managers). Indeed, previous empirical evidence has found that customer and manager perceptions may not be in alignment. Most notably, Smith et al. (2016) found that overweight female front desk agents were rated higher in perceived performance and elicited higher satisfaction ratings and higher intentions to promote the hotel they worked for than their less heavy counterparts. This deviates from Harris and Small's (2013) report that hotel managers may discriminate against overweight applicants and a large body of research showing hiring discrimination based on weight in other industries. Additionally, the perceptions of individuals experiencing houselessness (in general) may be different than those of *employees* experiencing houselessness in terms of warmth and competence. Concerning warmth, the fact that the individual experiencing houselessness is employed may signal that they have undergone posttraumatic growth, a transformative positive change that results from a struggle with challenging life events (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004). In Western cultures in particular, individuals may be lauded for overcoming and growing from prior adversity (see Maitlis, 2020). This counter stereotypical information should contribute to higher perceptions of warmth as the individual is no longer perceived to be a drain on societal resources. Concerning competence, these employees have been screened by a selection procedure (i.e., someone has determined that they are qualified for the job by hiring them) and thus should be perceived as being relatively competent. Thus, employees experiencing houselessness (compared to those who are not) may elicit more positive reactions from

customers due to perceptions of adversarial growth and the lack of personal association inherent in customer/service provider interactions.

Due to lack of evidence and theory regarding the fit of manager, and customer perceptions of houseless employees, we pose the following research question in Study 2:

> *Research Question 1: Will customer perceptions of an employee experiencing houselessness differ from hiring managers' perceptions of a job applicant experiencing houselessness?*

Study 2

We approached Study 2 in a similar way to Study 1, with some important modifications. First, because the context of this study is the customer service encounter, we modified the stimuli to reflect an interaction between a front desk employee and a guest checking into the hotel. Second, because we found no effect of housing status for female applicants in Study 1, we omitted gender as a predictor and focused on the impact of houselessness for male front desk agents for the sake of parsimony. Third, because front desk agents are often the most salient representation of the hotel and customer perceptions and satisfaction can have important bottom-line consequences, we included a measure of hotel perceptions to somewhat capture potential fiscal consequences for the hotel.

Study 2 Method

Participants. We recruited a total of 178 U.S. adults from MTurk (in line with recommendations by Feitosa et al., 2015). We removed 39 participants due to careless responding (as per Meade & Craig, 2012) and failure to pass manipulation checks, resulting in a final sample of 139. Most participants reported they were White/Caucasian (76%) and 50% were women. The average age of the participants was 35.9 years old ($SD = 10.9$), and the average

organizational tenure was 14.7 years (SD = 13.5). Ninety six percent of participants indicated that they stayed in hotels at least 1-2 times per year.

Procedure. At the onset of the study, we informed participants that we were a group of researchers asked by a hotel company to help evaluate a new hiring program. After consenting, participants listened to an audio recording of an interaction between a front desk agent and a guest that was created for this study. Participants then rated the employee's warmth and competence, satisfaction with the employee's performance, and satisfaction with the hotel in general.

Experimental Manipulation. This study used a between-subjects experimental design. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (housing status: houseless vs. non-houseless). Participants in the houseless condition were told they were evaluating a program designed to hire those experiencing houselessness, whereas participants in the non-houseless condition were told they were evaluating a new hiring program (see Appendix C for the message and manipulations). The content of the recording was identical in both conditions. In order to ensure any differences found were not due to idiosyncrasies associated with particular actors (as recommended by Highhouse, 2009), we randomly assigned participants to listen to one of two actors who played the "agent," while holding the actor who played the "guest" constant across recordings (there were no significant differences based on actor). Additionally, in these recordings we held race (White), gender (man), and nationality (U.S.) constant across all actors. Further, in order to avoid eliciting particularly strong positive or negative reactions to the agent, we constructed the interaction between the agent and the guest to describe a scenario in which the employee performed adequately, and after some complications was able to accomplish the guest's request (see Appendix D for a transcript of the scenario).

Measures. We measured perceptions of warmth ($\alpha = .92$) and competence ($\alpha = .84$) using the same items as in Study 1. We adapted four items ($\alpha = .92$) from Madera et al. (2009) to measure satisfaction with the employee interaction. A sample item is "This is an excellent employee." We used four items ($\alpha = .96$) derived from Yoon et al., (2006) to measure satisfaction with the hotel. Respondents were asked to rate the hotel in terms of how (a) favorable, (b) positive, (c) good, and (d) likeable they perceived it to be.

Study 2 Results

See Table 2 for descriptive statistics and correlations between variables. We examined our research question using similar analyses to Study 1. We conducted two mediation tests using Hayes' (2017) PROCESS macro (Model 4) in SPSS. For the first model, we entered houselessness as the predictor, warmth and competence as parallel mediators, and employee rating as the outcome. In support of Hypothesis 1, the results suggested that both warmth and competence were significantly related to employee ratings, $b = 0.64$, SE $= 0.11$, $p < .001$, CI [0.43, 0.86], and $b = 0.71$, SE $= 0.13$, $p < .001$, CI [0.50,0.92], respectively. Additionally, there was a main effect of houselessness on warmth, $b = 0.28$, SE $= 0.11$, $p < .05$, CI [0.07,0.50], such that employees experiencing houselessness were rated as being higher in warmth than their housed counterparts. There was not a direct effect of houselessness on competence, $b = 0.18$, SE $= 0.11$, $p = .11$, CI [-0.04,0.40]. The results also suggested that warmth was a significant mediator in the relation between houselessness and employee ratings, $b = 0.18$, SE $= 0.08$, CI [0.05, 0.37], but competence was not, $b = 0.10$, SE $= 0.06$, CI [-0.02, 0.22].

For the second model, we entered houselessness as the predictor, warmth and competence as parallel mediators, and hotel satisfaction as the outcome. The results suggested that both warmth and competence significantly predicted hotel satisfaction, $b = 0.43$, SE $= 0.10$, $p < .001$,

CI [0.22, 0.64], and $b = 0.53$, SE $= 0.10$, $p < .001$, CI [0.33, 0.73], respectively. The results also suggested that warmth was a significant mediator in the relation between houselessness and hotel satisfactions, $b = 0.12$, SE $= 0.06$, CI [0.02, 0.25], but not competence, $b = 0.10$, SE $= 0.06$, CI [-0.02, 0.22].

Regarding our Research Question, we found that customer perceptions of warmth and competence predicted both employee satisfaction and hotel satisfaction. Results also suggest that housing status had an indirect effect on both employee ratings and hotel satisfaction through warmth such that guests perceived unhoused front desk agents as being higher in warmth than housed employees, leading to higher perceived employee and hotel satisfaction ratings.

Study 2 Discussion

The purpose of this study was to examine customer reactions to employees experiencing houselessness. The results suggest that customers who interacted with unhoused employees reported higher employee ratings, and hotel satisfaction than customers who interacted with a housed employee. Warmth was a mediator in this relationship, but competence was not. These results contradict both past findings using the SCM to examine stereotypes related to houselessness (Harris & Fiske, 2006, 2007) and, interestingly, our findings from Study 1. We discuss these differences in the following section.

<div align="center">

General Discussion

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The purpose of the present research was to examine the influence of stereotypes concerning houselessness on hiring decisions, and customer satisfaction. Although past research suggests people experiencing houselessness are perceived to be low in warmth and competence, little is known about how these stereotypes influence gainful employment opportunities. Results from Study 1 demonstrate that men experiencing houselessness were rated lower on warmth, and

subsequently lower on hireability compared to women experiencing houselessness, and those with housing. Furthermore, results from Study 2 suggest that customers are more likely to perceive male employees experiencing houselessness as being higher in warmth than male employees with stable housing.

Theoretical Implications

The present study contributes to the limited research on the employment experiences of individuals experiencing houselessness. Our results suggest that stereotypes associated with houselessness begin to explain the high rates of unemployment in this population. These stereotypes are likely exacerbated by instances of racism, ageism, homophobia, biphobia, and ableism committed against these individuals. Moreover, individuals without housing who are seeking gainful employment are likely to encounter prejudice and discrimination in addition to pervasive structural barriers (e.g., lack of transportation, disabilities, challenges related to past incarceration or hospitalization). For individuals without housing who are employed, however, it seems that these stereotypes are not shared by customers and can lead to positive organizational outcomes. Accordingly, our study, through the application of the SCM, makes several theoretical contributions.

Of primary importance, our study is the first to examine stereotypes concerning people experiencing houselessness in the context of the SCM, and to use those stereotypes to predict organizational outcomes. Although past research has categorized this population within the SCM, it has not been used to predict employment outcomes such as selection, or performance appraisal. By using an experimental design, we can reject alternatives for hiring decisions (e.g., concerns about knowledge or experience) or hotel satisfaction (e.g., hotel quality). In particular,

our results support the assumption that the SCM can be applied to better understand displays of discrimination and prejudice, and how they impact underserved populations (Fiske, 2018).

Second, our results suggested that warmth, not competence, was the most important construct in this context. This contradicts past research in which competence was found to more strongly predict selection, and job performance outcomes (Cuddy et al., 2011; L. R. Martinez et al., 2016). The lack of findings for competence, from both a hiring manager, and a customer perspective, suggest that competence may be less of a concern in customer service contexts. Our findings, however, build on the current literature by confirming the importance of warmth in customer service jobs (Hurley, 1998). Specifically, our findings parallel those of Smith et al. (2016) wherein warmth was a significant predictor of customer satisfaction. Taken together, we advance the SCM framework by suggesting the values of warmth and competence interact with industry and job role stereotypes.

Third, we examined stereotypes and organizational outcomes from two distinct perspectives: a hiring manager and a customer. Interestingly, hiring managers and customer perceptions of men experiencing houselessness did not align. Specifically, hiring managers perceived lower warmth among male applicants experiencing houselessness (vs. male applicants with stable housing), while customers perceived lower warmth among male employees with stable housing (vs. male employees experiencing houselessness). These findings suggest that existing beliefs about the match between an organization's wants, and the customer's wants might be incorrect. Thus, one might consider the different perspectives of different raters of performance. For example, Motowidlo and Peterson (2008) found that performance of correctional officers was rated differently by both prison inmates and supervisors. As such, future research should examine SCM assumptions across raters.

Practical Implications

Our study provides several practical implications that can be applied across a variety of ecological systems. Specifically, we make recommendations at the community, organizational, and individual levels. Community organizers can use the findings of this research to build more efficacious employment programs for those who are unhoused. A number of community initiatives exist to place those experiencing houselessness into gainful employment, while simultaneously providing shelter, healthcare, and other resources (Ferguson et al., 2012). For example, many local community groups use the Individual Placement and Support Model (IPS; Drake et al., 1999) to place people into jobs at a number of organizations (e.g., Hilton Worldwide, Best Western, and Doubletree Hotel), while simultaneously providing job training and mental health services. Our results suggest that these efforts may be strengthened by adding community-wide education about the stereotypes associated with being unhoused, and strategies to overcome them. For instance, local community or government organizations could create public service campaigns designed to educate community members about the structural (as opposed to individual) causes of houselessness. Specifically, these campaigns could include counter stereotypic information about those who are unhoused, using personal testimonies in order to challenge harmful beliefs held towards those without housing. By working to change perceptions at the community level, is possible that those without housing encounter less discrimination in their lives, including the workplace.

Additionally, organizations and hiring personnel should consider the benefits of hiring houseless employees, particularly within the hospitality industry. In addition to providing employment, hotels are in a unique position to provide temporary housing to unhoused employees, thus participating in a corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative to support the

larger community. This type of CSR engagement is in line with the work of other organizations such as rideshare companies that provide individuals with free transportation to job interviews and training (MacGuill, 2021). CSR programs can yield improved customer perceptions of an organization, higher customer satisfaction, and better company performance (Mohr & Webb, 2005; Orlitzky et al., 2003). Hence, the net impact of a hotel's temporary housing initiative for new employees has the potential to reach far beyond the significant benefits to the houseless individuals themselves. More generally, organizations should coach their employees and hiring managers to avoid stereotypic judgements when selecting new employees as these stereotypes introduce bias and error to selection systems. This can be done through diversity training, and interventions that teach about stereotypes using perspective taking and goal setting (Lindsey et al., 2015). Moreover, to prevent biased decision making, hiring managers should be prepared to justify all hiring decisions with objective information and applicant ratings (Koch et al., 2015).

Although we strongly assert that the onus of responsibility for improving outcomes should not fall on those who are stigmatized, our results do suggest strategies that people experiencing houselessness could use to avoid or remediate bias that they may experience. For instance, individuals who are experiencing houselessness might consider providing counter stereotypical information when applying for a job. Past research suggests that stereotyped groups can provide counter stereotypical information to avoid hiring and interpersonal discrimination (Morgan et al., 2013). Specifically, if there are concerns about warmth, applicants can include skills and experience with customer service in the application materials. Additionally, the applicant can explicitly address their housing situation by providing the potential employer with more information such as when they foresee themselves finding housing. or by informing them that they have temporary housing. Providing more information about one's self `humanizes' the

houseless individual and distinguishes that individual from their group-level stereotypes, allowing people to make positive judgments about them (Sears, 1983; Durante et al., 2017). Although these methods may be efficacious, they attempt to change stereotypes by making the victim of the stereotype the one responsible for correcting it. We urge readers to consider other implications of these findings so that the individual does not bear the onus of remediating negative stereotypes about themselves.

Limitations and Future Research

Our use of a controlled experimental design to test predictions of the SCM yielded much needed insights into how houselessness stereotypes manifest themselves during the hiring process and within employee-customer interactions. However, a limitation of experimental designs is that they often lack external validity, limiting generalizability across populations and settings. For example, observation may have led to socially desirable responses such that, in more realistic settings without observation, participants may demonstrate more prejudice towards individuals experiencing houselessness. Additional research employing a field study in organizational settings among managers and customers who are unaware that they are being observed is needed to complement the findings of this research. Similarly, our study was limited to a hotel context, and thus our findings may not generalize across industries. Future research should continue to examine the experiences of job applicants and employees experiencing houselessness across different types of jobs and industries to examine if these findings apply to broader populations. Indeed, our findings suggest that job- and industry-related stereotypes should be considered within the SCM. It seems that warmth was particularly important in the hospitality context. Continued research may find that other industries differ in terms of the relative importance of warmth and competence. Future research should also continue to use an

intersectional lens to understand how intersecting identities mitigate, or exacerbate, stereotypes surrounding houselessness. Particularly, we suggest that perceptions of warmth may be lower among Black men experiencing houseless compared to White men experiencing houselessness (Wrighting et al., 2019).

Finally, we sampled from MTurk. Several problems and difficulties have been associated with using this platform including participant inattentiveness and artificial responding via computer scripts. We implemented a number of practices to ensure that we had a high-quality sample. For instance, we screened the data for inattentiveness by examining attention check items, invariability in responding, and fast completion times (Meade & Craig, 2012). Furthermore, the upside of using MTurk was that it allowed for a diverse sampling of those within our specific category of interest (i.e., hotel managers with hiring experience, and hotel customers). Participants came from a variety of backgrounds and organizations allowing for more generalizability in our results. Future research can, and should, confirm these findings within different samples and methodologies in actual organizational settings.

Conclusion

Recent diversity efforts in organizations have allowed for improved hiring outcomes for underrepresented, and stigmatized populations. However, individuals who are experiencing houselessness been excluded from these efforts. Individuals who are unhoused are a rapidly growing population with increasingly higher unemployment rates (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2020). These individuals have the capacity to work, particularly in customer service contexts. Thus, it is essential for organizations to address discrimination related to houselessness, particularly in hospitality contexts where employers can benefit potential employees through access to gainful employment and immediate short-term housing while stable

housing is being secured. Hotels themselves will profit from a committed and engaged

workforce, and from promoting greater social health.

Footnotes

[1]We use the term "houseless" to focus on lack of stable housing instead of the more colloquial "homeless" to avoid associations related to locations that have meaning through a sense of belonging (Kidd & Evans, 2011; Winetrobe et al., 2017).

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Tables

Table 1
Descriptive statistics and correlations for Study 1.

	M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5
1. Warmth	4.45	1.34	1				
2. Competence	4.41	1.27	.81**	1			
3. Hireability	4.11	1.39	.77**	.80**	1		
4. Gender Condition	-	-	-.11	-.18*	.03	1	
5. Houselessness Condition	-	-	-.11	-.12	-.10	.07	1

Note. Gender (0 = Man, 1 = Woman); Houselessness (0 = Unhoused Applicant, 1 = Housed
Applicant).
** $p \leq .01$
* $p \leq .05$

Table 2
Descriptive statistics and correlations for Study 2.

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Warmth	4.07	0.75	1				
2. Competence	3.53	0.75	.61**	1			
3. Employee Satisfaction	5.47	1.24	.65**	.67**	1		
4. Hotel Satisfaction	5.67	1.03	.54**	.57**	.29**	1	
5. Houselessness Condition	-	-	.19**	.12	.14	.07	1

Note. Houselessness (0 = Unhoused Applicant, 1 = Housed Applicant).
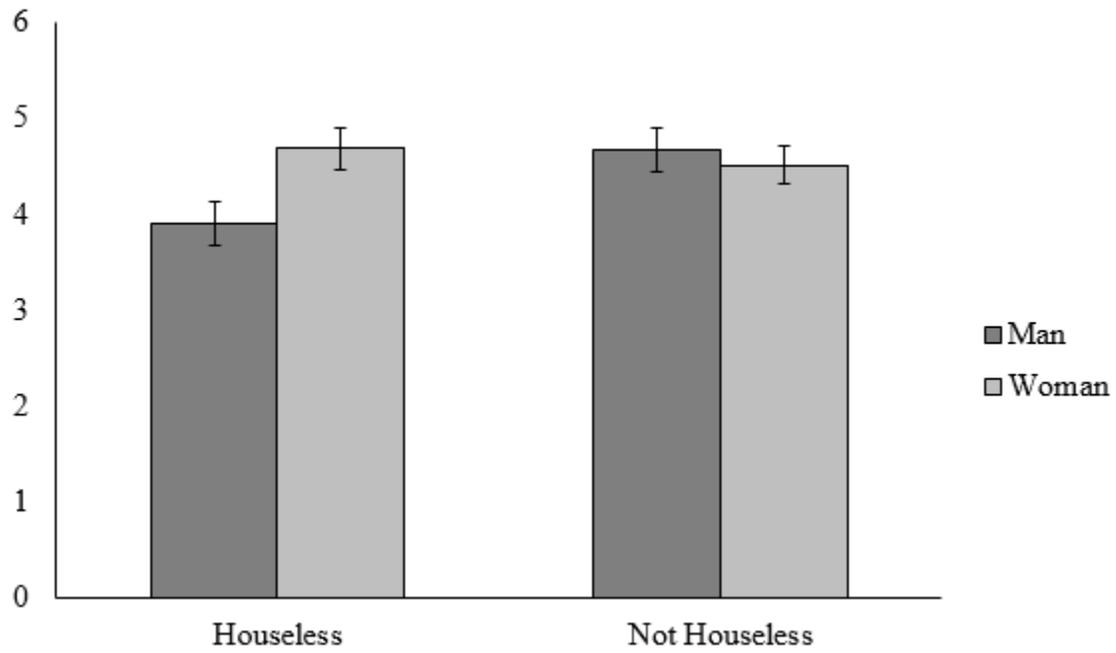** $p \leq .01$

Figures

Figure 1. Mean differences between men and women in perceived warmth across both housing

conditions.

Sam Baker

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Objective

To obtain a career in the hotel industry so that I can gain more knowledge and experience within the hotel setting.

Education

DIPLOMA | MAY 2012 | MIDLAND HIGH SCHOOL

Skills & Abilities

COMMUNICATION
· Developed excellent communication skills in the various roles that I have held.
· Succeed in thinking under pressure when presented a problem directly and can effectively communicate the solution to that problem

LEADERSHIP
· Selected to serve in leadership positions at the former hotel and restaurant where I have worked for a total of four years.
· Established the fundamental skills necessary to be a leader within the workplace, including but not limited to patience, empathy, determination, and leading by example.

Experience

FRONT DESK AGENT | THE MIDLAND HOTEL | SEPTEMBER 2017 – NOVEMEBER 2017
· Executed the appropriate actions to handle and resolve all guest needs as a trained Front Desk Agent.
· Acquired the communication, problem solving, and multitasking skills necessary of a Front Desk Agent.
· Began to master the skills of the Property Management System.

ROOM ATTENDANT | THE MIDLAND HOTEL | JANUARY 2014 – SEPTEMBER 2017
· Collected experience in various roles within the housekeeping department, including public area, room attendant, and turn-down attendant.
· Served as a Supervisor on Duty to lead the housekeeping team and instruct employees when needed.

WAIT STAFF | DARDEN RESTAURANT | SEPTEMBER 2013 – DECEMBER 2014
· Mastered jobs of kitchen prep, expediting, bussing, serving, and hosting/
· Designated to be a Wait Staff Supervisor, overseeing the side work and end-of-day responsibilities of all wait staff.

Appendix B

Audio Recording Scripts for Study 1

Note: the manipulation is presented in italics, where the control condition is presented first (outside of parentheses), followed by the houselessness condition in parentheses.

Interviewer: Sam, have you ever worked in a hotel before?

Applicant: Yes, I have. I worked in a hotel for three years prior to this interview.

Interviewer: Thank you. Did you have any experiences there that you believe have prepared you to work at this hotel?

Applicant: During my three years there, I have had a number of experiences that have prepared me for this job. Working full-time, every day presented itself with new challenges and experiences that helped me to grow as an employee. Whether it was having to take on additional work because a co-worker called out sick or interacting with guests, I have learned from my former job to prepare me for this one.

Interviewer: And what specific experience do you have working at a front desk?

Applicant: I do have limited experience at the front desk. My work in hotels has mostly been in the back-of-the-house, but I did end up working at the front desk at my last job for a few months and gained a little bit of experience.

Interviewer: And how did you handle guest interactions while working at the front desk?

Applicant: Most of my interactions were pleasant. Of course, there can always be one or two interactions where it is hard to maintain a positive attitude and you end up arguing with the guest, but other than one or two instances I believe it was good overall.

Interviewer: Would you be able to elaborate on those one or two instances?

Applicant: Well, you know how it can be with guests. They always believe that they are right, and it is important to remember that, generally speaking, that belief holds true. But occasionally it gets to a point where you have to put your foot down and not give in to what they are claiming. That is what I had to do in those instances.

Interviewer: Thank you. Let me look back over your resume. *Pauses for a moment* Now I see here at the top that you did not list a current place of residency. Did it accidentally get cut off?

Applicant: My apologies. I just moved into a new apartment and meant to update my address. I must have deleted the old one and forgotten to add my new one. I can provide that for you if you would like. *(My apologies. I actually do not have a current place of residency. I am working to get back into a steady place of living soon, but I am trying to find a job before doing so.)*

Interviewer: That would be excellent, thank you so much. We need it for our documentation of your application. *(I see. So, you currently do not have a permanent address?)*

Applicant: I completely understand. That is not a problem**.** *(That is correct, I do not.)*

Interviewer: Alright, and if hired, what would you hope to gain from this position?

Applicant: I would hope to gain a stronger knowledge and understanding of providing guests the best experience they can receive at the hotel. I would also hope to get to know the team members better and see how they work together to help each other achieve their goals.

Interviewer: Thank you very much.

Appendix C

Introductory Message and Manipulations for Study 2

Note: the manipulation is presented in italics, where the control condition is presented first (outside of parentheses), followed by the homelessness condition in parentheses.

Thank you for agreeing to help us. We are a group of researchers who have been tasked with evaluating the effectiveness of a new program that a major hotel chain has recently implemented. As a consumer who has stayed in hotels, your thoughts and opinions are extremely important in helping us determine the effectiveness of this program.

Our client, a hotel, has recently begun a new system for hiring people in their hotel. (Our client, a hotel, has recently begun a new initiative targeted at reducing homelessness in the community by employing homeless people in their hotel.)

We need you to help us by listening to the following interaction between one of these workers hired through this program and a guest. Then answer the questions below to help us evaluate the effectiveness of this program.

<div align="center">**Appendix D**</div>

<div align="center">**Script of Interaction Between the Agent and the Guest**</div>

Sam: Good afternoon, my name is Sam, are you checking in?

Taylor: Yes.

Sam: May I have your name, please?

Taylor: It's Taylor Jones.

Sam: Thank you, please give me a moment to pull up your reservation *pauses for a few moments*. I am having some trouble pulling up your reservation. Did you make your reservation online or over the phone?

Taylor: It was over the phone.

Sam: Could I have the phone number you provided?

Taylor: 344-3363

Sam: Thank you for that. I see the problem, for some reason your reservation was not put in the system correctly, and it looks like all of the types of room that you reserved are not available.

Taylor: *Sounds frustrated* Are there any rooms available at all?

Sam: *Pauses for a few moments*

Please give me one moment. I'm still a little new and I haven't dealt with a problem like this before. Please hold on while I get my manager on the phone for assistance.

Pauses for a moment

Hi, I have a guest with a reservation for a king bedroom facing the city, but the reservation was put in the system wrong originally and all of those rooms seem to be booked in the system, is there anything I can do?

Pauses for a moment

Thank you so much... Yes, I see that... Okay, I clicked on that... Okay, great. Thanks for your help.

Thank you so much for your patience, my manager was able to help me fix your reservation and we were able to find a room available as you requested.

Taylor: That's great news.

Sam: OK, here are your room cards. Your room is 262. You can use these elevators directly behind you, there is a complimentary breakfast from 6 to 9, and you can access the fitness center if you like. May I help you with anything else right now?

Taylor: No, thank you.

Sam: I hope you have a nice stay.