

**Transformative Mobility and the Homeless;
Perceptions and Actions as a Result of Using Storage Facilities**

Peggy Peattie

University of San Diego

Abstract

The origin of a Hepatitis A outbreak in 2018 in San Diego was determined to have generated among the homeless population. Shopping carts overflowing with clothing, bedding, pet food, bicycle parts and other items were cited as a major component of the problem (Sisson, 2018). Possession of shopping carts were subsequently made illegal, and sidewalk cleaning was initiated until the epidemic was deemed under control. However, the items homeless individuals carried in their carts constituted the sum total of all they considered valuable. Outlawing shopping carts, therefore, did not necessarily result in a reduction of the contents of those carts, merely their redistribution into other means of transporting them. One recent solution was the creation of storage facilities where homeless individuals could secure their belongings, thereby removing those items from public spaces.

Being liberated from constant vigilance over their belongings creates mobility for homeless individuals that has the potential for physically and psychologically transformative experiences. This qualitative study involved interviews with staff and clients at the newly opened Storage Connect Center, to generate knowledge about what clients do with their mobility, how they perceive quality of life and how they imagine meaningful change. The insights they shared about life on the streets, their goals and motivations, and how they are affected by other people's perceptions of them, are revealed in this case study.

Transformative Mobility and the Homeless Study

The most recent annual report from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) revealed that, on any given night, there are 554,000 individuals looking for shelter (US-HUD, 2018) across America. Many of these individuals still use shopping carts and, also wheeled luggage to carry all of their personal belongings, a situation that requires maintaining

constant vigilance over the carriers and their contents (Capps, 2014). A recent outbreak of Hepatitis A in San Diego, determined by county health officials to have originated among the homeless, included 20 deaths and 395 hospitalizations (Sisson, 2018; Youn, 2018). This health crisis brought the intersection of the overflowing shopping carts and public health to an elevated level of concern, specifically in neighborhoods where homeless individuals are in high concentration. One innovative approach to a partial solution is the recent establishment of two storage facilities, operated by nonprofit organizations, in San Diego's urban core, where homeless individuals can secure their belongings, potentially allowing them to hold a job with regular hours, make appointments for health care, social services, court appointments, and look for housing.

City officials praised the concept as potentially life-changing. Dignitaries from other cities have flown to San Diego to visit these facilities (Halverstadt, 2019). Newspaper articles reported on their opening (see for instance Capps, 2014; Halverstaadt, 2019; Lopez-Villafaña, 2018), however, I found no academic study to date, that identifies what homeless individuals actually do with the greater mobility that being liberated from their belongings provides.

This research study sought to fill that knowledge gap by performing a qualitative case study, employing open-ended, conversational interviews with staff and clients at Storage Connect Center, the most recently opened storage facility. I detoured around the usual government experts, program specialists and social advocates to go directly to those individuals who are more frequently the subject of discussion than active participants in the conversation. Specifically, in order to determine whether freeing homeless individuals from constant vigilance over their belongings correlates with creating circumstances that empower them to initiate meaningful changes, it was important to ask those individuals directly about how they perceive

quality of life, and what role the storage facility played in their lived experiences. This paper offers details from their narrative responses, and the findings that, while physical liberation from their belongings is indeed potentially transformative, the co-resultant psychological transformation is equally impactful, if not more-so.

Methods

This qualitative study employed a case study/narrative analysis design, because the case study approach is “holistic and context sensitive, two of the primary strategic themes of qualitative inquiry” (Patton, 2015). Narrative analysis, meanwhile, is most appropriate when pursuing the understanding of how participants “construct meaning from their experiences and/or how they structure the narrating or telling of those experiences,” (Glesne, 2016). An interview guide was used during informal, conversational interviews. Four staff personnel and twelve clients at Storage Connect Center (SCC), a free storage facility for homeless individuals, operated by the nonprofit organization Mental Health Systems, participated in the study. All of the staff, as well as eight of the clients, consented to have their interviews video recorded.

Site and Participant Selection

Storage Connect Center was chosen for two reasons. One, the facility had only been in operation for seven months, and the experience of how utilizing this facility impacted clients’ lives would be fresh in their minds, rather than routine. Secondly, an associate of mine works for Mental Health Systems, though not at this facility, and she was able to put me in contact with the facility program manager. After visiting the facility and explaining the research proposal to the program manager, I was given permission to approach whichever clients I chose, (not necessarily clients that were hand-picked by staff). Initial participants were chosen by random selection, while subsequent participants were identified using respondent-driven sampling (Patton, 2015).

Specifically, I asked initial client and staff participants to identify other individuals who were likely to have stories that differed from their own.

Data Collection

Conversational interviews loosely structured around an interview guide proceeded in an open-ended form of “ethnographic interviewing” (Patton, 2015), that moved in whatever direction emerged from the participants’ storytelling (p. 437). This method encouraged the sharing of unsolicited personal stories and perspectives; the majority of which were recorded on a video camera (four staff, eight clients), with the remaining few (four clients) voice recorded only.

Four visits to the facility occurred on two separate Tuesdays, and two separate Saturdays. There was little “down time” between interviews to write observations in a field notebook while at the facility. I typically resorted to sitting in my car after leaving the facility, to write noteworthy observations before they left my head.

Analysis and Production

One of the initial goals of the study was to produce individual case stories. A second goal was to analyze respondent comments, discovering themes from the narratives of respondents as well as thorough review of field notes (Spradley, 1979). Once these two tasks were completed, a video was created using those narrative-generated themes.

The video and audio recordings of interviews were downloaded into an editing software program, Premiere Pro. The interviews were transcribed into text. The text was then read through three times looking for prominent themes. There were 15 themes identified in the transcripts as outstanding issues for study participants. Those 15 themes were collapsed into the seven final categories used for coding.

One of the central research questions of this study was whether or not the mobility afforded by securing one's belongings at SCC has the potential to enhance clients' quality of life. The category *Transformative Mobility*, therefore, also incorporates the themes of *Motivation* and *Solutions*. Comments that were reflective about *Storage Connect Center* itself were put into one single category. The theme *Street Life*, which includes detailed colorful personal experiences, incorporates stories of life at area *Shelters*, a topic that generated passionate responses.

I combined the theme *Cops* with *Perceptions of the Homeless* into *Police and Perceptions*. The theme *Essentials* combines what is both *Essential* to carry during the day, with what *Keepsakes* are so important they need to be securely stored so they are protected from theft. Dealing with mental and physical health concerns adds layers of complexity to the lives of homeless individuals, so the theme *Health* was combined with *Obstacles to Success* and *Access to Resources* under the category *Obstacles*.

Finally, themes of *Background*, often simply where someone was born, and *Haunts*, the stories of real-life nightmares that drove some individuals to conceal themselves among America's homeless, infused heartfelt commentaries into the rubric of homelessness in America, and were collapsed into the category *The Past*.

After a lengthy process of extracting comments from the transcripts and assigning them to the aforementioned themes, the resulting set of findings was organized but in no way reflected the vibrant data documented. Producing a list of categories and comments simply did not adequately reflect "the story and the act of telling of that story" (Glesne, 2016). In both video and written forms, therefore, findings are presented primarily through a single case story using narrative analysis, the organization of qualitative data into a story format (Polkinghorne, 1995), while comments from other respondents are proffered under the heading *Other Voices*.

Using video to collect the data was particularly advantageous even if I had intended to only report findings in text rather than video form, as it allowed me to document things that otherwise would be left to explain in words alone (e.g. how clients organize their belongings, the spontaneity of gestures and tone of voice as respondents explain their social world) all in the context of the environment at the heart of the study (Geertz, 1988; Patton, 2015). Names of the clients throughout this paper have been changed to pseudonyms to respect their privacy, while the names of staff are their actual names. To be clear, the video produced for this study in no way mirrors the depth of analysis or presentation of findings that exists in this written report. Since one of the primary goals of this study is to respect the voices of homeless individuals themselves (Fiske-Rusciano & Cyrus, 2005), the short video produced to accompany this report offers an academic audience the opportunity to hear those voices directly. The digital technology that facilitates a global gathering and sharing of information also allows for the inclusion of supplemental information like that embodied in this video: a visual appendix, if you will.

Setting the Scene

Just inside the open doorway of an industrial warehouse, Maria Chavez smiled at her granddaughter, a bouncy toddler struggling to escape from her stroller. Chavez's teenage son sat in one of the chairs lining the head-high partition that separated the otherwise unfurnished public area from the 500 storage bins in neat rows running front to back in the cavernous back space. The toddler's mother, Chavez's 16-year-old daughter Emily, made quick circles around the stroller her daughter occupied and the second stroller her mother was leaning on. Emily quickly sorted the clothing she wanted to keep for the day, adding it to a growing pile on her mother's stroller, and the ones the family could do without, folding those and dropping them into the family's bin.

Even though she had not slept well, and her voice was hoarse, Chavez readily shared personal goals for herself, and how the storage facility was becoming a component in her motivation towards those goals. She was working on a psychology degree, she explained, so she could become a school counselor, earn more than just a living wage, and secure permanent housing for her family. Keeping her belongings at the storage facility meant she was able to spend several days a week at the library looking for work, while on other days she attended to health and social services appointments for herself and the children. The family was staying at an overnight shelter for now, but chronic theft at the shelter, and having to leave by 6:30 a.m., put a strain on her physically and mentally. At the end of the week, their month of access to the shelter would be up. Though they were on a waiting list for other temporary shelters, they had no other options. Sleeping on the street, however, Chavez said, was preferable to enduring even one more minute of the domestic violence situation she fled.

Chavez knew she needed to see a counselor about the trauma she had been through. But, for now, she was compartmentalizing her emotions, to deal with them later. On this clear, bright Saturday morning, the family planned to take a break from worry. They were headed to the laundromat. Chavez was excited about having clean, fresh-smelling clothes. After the laundromat, the plan was to take the children to the park; joined by another young mother and her children who are in a different temporary shelter; one that will soon be closing. Finished with sorting belongings, Chavez's son returned their bin to the desk, telling intake staff what items were added and what was removed. The family then pushed their strollers out through the warehouse door, into the bright sunlight.

Chavez's family represents one of the clients who utilize the 500 free storage bins available for individuals experiencing homelessness in San Diego. Figures gathered by the

WeAllCount Point-In-Time survey conducted by the San Diego County Regional Task Force on the Homeless, revealed 8,576 unsheltered individuals in San Diego County (SDCRTF, 2018).

This current study involved only a small sampling of clients making use of the storage facilities (and an even smaller sample of the city's homeless population). Interviews with Chavez and other clients, however, generated a rich body of personal narratives and perspectives that can help reframe our approach to social change as it relates to homelessness.

Life Experiences and Perceptions

In a warehouse that could easily harbor several helicopters, eight neat rows of trash bins stretch from the front to the back, all padlocked and numbered. Of the 500 bins, at the time of this research study 470 were in active use and 30 were assigned to individuals on a waiting list who have not yet claimed their bin. New clients must wait for someone to exit the system, or for one of the wait-listed bins to be re-entered into the general pool after the designated waiting period. According to Program Manager Veronica Aguilar, clients are given 90 days to “check in,” meaning they show up at the facility, after they have started using a bin. “If they don’t check in within 90 days or later, then we have to discard their belongings. But once they check in it just gets extended 90 days every time they check in,” she said.

Two of the clients, a brother and sister team I will call Brian and Carla, stood on opposite sides of an open storage bin, grabbing blankets from a mound on the floor, folding them, then stacking them inside the bin. They considered themselves fortunate to have been assigned a bin four days earlier and were even more surprised at how hospitable the staff was. “Honestly, most of the places here in San Diego that say they’re here to help the homeless get up on our feet, it’s just a dog and pony show, they don’t do much,” Carla said. “But this place, they’re legit. They actually do the work to make us feel secure and get on our feet. It’s a process and it takes time.”

A heavyset woman with multiple tattoos on every visible part of her body, Carla came to San Diego in 2012 to reunite with her brother and escape a bad situation in Kentucky. She said she'd tried several programs in San Diego; SCC is the first that offered what she needed: "You come here, you can use the restroom, you store your stuff, they give you housing resources, if you need anything to do with mental health, they can point you in the direction of that too."

Carla wants to find work and a loving relationship, and she wants to be a man. She is motivated to find housing for herself and her brother, whose life is complicated by a severe learning disability. On the day I met them, Carla, 33, and Brian, 36, were hoping to meet with a case worker to discuss access to housing. They had missed their appointment the previous day because both of them were in mandated parole programs. While she talked, Carla kept one hand wrapped around a dog tag hanging from a long chain around her neck. The dog tag had a picture of a superhero named Jesse on one side, and a phone number on the back with a message: *Carla, call Jesse!* The other talisman on her necklace was a transgender symbol. "It's basically the two things that make up who I am, or give me strength," she said. "I can play with it or hold onto it if things get overwhelming or stressful, it kind of centers me and brings me back my hope."

Most of their other personal belongings had been stolen on the street. "We had pictures, jewelry that I can't get back, clothes, money, things that we had since we were kids," Carla said, so they see the ability to safely store what they have left as a means of safeguarding the few remaining artifacts that allow them to feel connected to humanity. Before they found the storage facility, Brian added, they either had to conceal their belongings in a bush or trust someone to watch them. Five days in a row their belongings were stolen from a shopping cart they had left in the care of people they felt they could trust. Being able to leave things at SCC "gives you peace of mind," he said. Now, with their few keepsakes secure, what they consider essential to carry

with them is pared down to hygiene, food, medication and protection. “I’m not gonna lie, my brother still carries a knife,” Carla said. “A pocket knife, because recently I was raped, so he feels that some things are good to have now.”

Obstacles

One night while sleeping in Balboa Park, after her brother left to use the restroom, she felt a tap on her shoulder. When her brother did return, he discovered she had been left for dead after being raped and strangled. At the hospital she was treated for bruises, and samples of bodily fluids revealed three attackers. The female police officer was kind, Carla said, but the female officer’s male partner made comments suggesting Carla had brought it on herself. “He wasn’t very understanding,” she said.

Pulling back a sleeve to reveal the tattoos on each arm, Carla said because of her size, her tattoos and short hair, she is misunderstood and seen as aggressive, even dangerous. “I have multiple stigmas on me because I’m trans, I’m homeless, I’m an ex-junkie and I’m tatted,” she laughed. “So, if I tell them (police) ‘Hey, I just robbed this place,’ they’re gonna say, ‘Yup, I believe you. Now put your hands behind your back.’ There’s usually no question because of how I look.”

Perceptions of the homeless, by police and other members of society, create obstacles in multiple ways that affect their quality of life (Corrigan & Shapiro, 2010; Phillips, 2015). Carla said she has applied for work at every McDonald’s restaurant in San Diego County, to no avail. Her brother also has applied for work at numerous grocery stores and warehouses. However, Carla explained, his learning disability stands in the way of him acting quickly or problem-solving without assistance. Even if you find a potential employer or landlord willing to see past appearances, Carla noted, overcoming the stigma of a prison record adds yet another hurdle.

“My past haunts me,” Carla said. “Even though I was a juvenile, because of the degree of the crime...” She shakes her head and looks to her brother, who stands stoically looking back. Carla shakes her head again and wraps her hand tighter around her necklace, then looks down. “That haunts me every day, you know? And when I apply for jobs, they don’t ask any questions because when they see manslaughter...I didn’t even know he was dead until I was 18.”

Carla was put in a position of having to defend herself from constant sexual abuse by the man her mother was dating. Her mother knew about it and did nothing, she said. Her grandmother came to her defense, but the man broke her grandmother’s shoulder twice after she’d tried to keep him away from Carla, so the grandmother was helpless to protect her. Carla explained how she eventually took matters into her own hands:

I took a carpenter’s knife and put it on a plastic ruler with electrical tape. And when the guy was done using me, or whatever, raped me, he would have me sit naked with my hands behind my back, under my pillow. So that night when he did it, I hid the ruler with the carpenter blade under my pillow so when he turned around, he went in to burn me with a cigarette and I (Carla swings her arm in a wide karate chop motion up and down) swung it. They said 11 times, I only got him six. But I got him three times in his neck and three times in his leg, each time it was a hit in an artery and I didn’t know that. They put me in a psychiatric prison, so it was kind of a hospital, but prison, for kids. I was seven and a half.

Solutions

Carla advocates for a housing first solution for people like her and her brother. Permanent housing would not only reduce the negative stigma associated with carrying one’s belongings, but it would help build up a record of stability they could show to potential employers and

reduce their time on the street where encounters with police are sure to happen (Hess, 2000; Sanburn, 2014). She has tried staying at the shelters but was repulsed by the unsanitary conditions at God's Extended Hand, where she said the blankets are never washed, and a rat jumped on her cot one night. At St. Vincent de Paul, the wait is long for a bed because people idle there for years, and theft is commonplace, she added.

Carla expressed a strong desire to meet with housing and mental health specialists, both of which she had been told she can accomplish at SCC. She has been clean from using any kind of substance for a year, she said, though she was aware the perception of being a junkie will forever taint any encounters with police. She was "a bad heroin addict," nearly killing herself each time she shot up until her brother and a girlfriend convinced her to quit. "She gave me hope, made me believe in myself," Carla said. Coping with the past, especially addiction and being on parole, is a daily battle, but one she is committed to fighting. She said she likes the person she is now, and that is enough motivation to overcome the physical and psychological obstacles. "I'm working on things to be the person I know that I can be, and I deserve to be," she added.

Transformative Mobility

According to figures compiled by Aguilar's staff, and submitted to the San Diego Housing Commission, over the course of the first seven months of operation, 655 individual clients were served between the June 13, 2018 opening and February 15, 2019 (SDHC, 2019). Of those individuals, people between the ages of 25 and 54 represented the category with the largest number at 432, while the category with the second highest number was persons with disabilities, at 344. Of the 103 clients that closed their bin account between opening day and April 19, 2019, there were 73, (70%) clients who left because they obtained housing, employment or both.

Specifically, 63 obtained housing, two secured employment and eight found a situation that was both housing and employment combined.

All of the client respondents considered housing their top priority. Several were either in school, had applied to school or expressed a desire to study as a path to a new career. Clients were universally positive about being able to store their belongings at SCC, though one felt “dehumanized” at the fact a security guard escorted clients to and from the bathroom. All of the clients had tried to work within the existing system, going to the shelters and seeking housing or employment assistance through the services provided there. However, their personal experiences left them with the perception the system is broken.

Three of the women I spoke with were currently staying at different shelters. Three of the men were trying to get back into a shelter, and two other men had left the shelters because they were disgusted with conditions there. All spoke about the rampant theft that goes on in the shelters and the lack of accountability when something goes missing, including one’s laundry. “It’s poverty pimping at its best,” Frank said. Clifton clandestinely took photos with his cell phone of the bathroom that had been closed for two weeks waiting for the plumbing to be repaired, the food with past-due expiration dates, and the chicken he wouldn’t eat that had “freezer burn.” Frank had worked four years as a cook at a St. Vincent de Paul in Marin county, and said they at least treated clients like human beings in Marin, whereas at “Vinny’s” in San Diego, the “armed guards [are] beating on guests or punishing them for things that they can’t help.” Clifton echoed that sentiment, relating that one of the residents in his four-person room was an elderly man in a wheelchair who frequently urinated in his bed because he couldn’t make it to the restroom in time. “The guy shouldn’t be there,” Clifton said. “He should be in a board and care where they can take him to the restroom. It’s not his fault.”

Despite multiple obstacles and disheartening experiences, respondents shared stories about what motivated them to seek meaningful change in their quality of life; others offered suggestions about immediate actions that would help them help themselves (Table 1).

Table 1. Comments on Motivation and Solutions

Client	Transformative Mobility, Motivation, Solutions
Dominic	Well I just try to survive, that's it. Getting food, getting clothing here, there. And maybe try to find a house eventually. I'm trying to find a job making money. I don't find one yet. I work in restaurants.
Krystal	One thing I would change at SCC is weekend hours. Life doesn't stop on the weekends, you know? We have church, we have this we have that. Like for instance I'm going to go stand in line to take a shower and if I don't get finished in time I'm gonna be stuck with my dirty clothes.
Carla	I want to find housing for me and my brother. And stay clean. I didn't see purpose in myself. When I got with this girl, she was a teacher, she gave me hope, made me believe in myself.
Frank	I would start by firing over half the police department. I would get MSW ones and twos in the HOT team instead of using cops, who arrest us.
Eyes	I'm able to go to school. I've long been aware that if you want to have a meaningful life, like some meaningful pay, best thing you can do is go back to school. Nobody really wants to work for \$11 an hour.
Clifton	You're always trying to hide that you're homeless. I don't know if they won't hire you but they definitely look at you different. I mean you just want to be treated like anybody else.
Maria	With mobility I'm able to go take care of business, use the library. You can look at online services, use the computer, look on there for everything you need: housing, clothing, transportation. The kids, when they go to school, they have tutoring there. Transportation is a big issue for me, and housing. There's lots of empty places in the county which could be fixed up as a temporary thing, or even year round.
Cheryl	People shouldn't be charging \$1,200-\$1,800 for a studio. California, as far as housing goes, it's for the rich. I'm going to start school in May. And the state of California is paying for it through a grant. You can't come to this state without money, even if you're homeless.
Cassandra	They should have more places for people to go. Even if it's another day center, cuz the one we have closes at 4 p.m. That's five hours wandering around with your stuff and not doing anything. I would make more portable pots around and more sinks.

Client	Transformative Mobility, Motivation, Solutions
Tony	I'm a certified behavioral health technician, treating people with dementia. That brought me \$12 in Phoenix, not enough to get a house. I was left on my own two weeks ago after I got my pacemaker put in. So I'm trying to find shelter. Attitude is far greater than circumstances. I could have been shot 15 times but if I end up at the Pearly Gates, it's all good. It's a beautiful thing this life.
Lara	I was a chemical dependency therapist. That's what I used to do. My i.d. was stolen and I have to transfer my license before I can work here. I have to do some testing and everything first. Until then I usually work in the nursing field or child care. I just need a break.

Other Voices

Thus far, I have discussed the impact that physical mobility afforded by the storage facility generated for facility clients. An unanticipated thematic construct, revealed through respondent comments, was the psychological transformation resulting from how clients are able to present themselves in public after liberating themselves of excess belongings.

As is often the case with marginalized communities, efforts by the more dominant, surrounding community to characterize the values and behaviors of that marginalized group typically result in inaccurate simplifications and conglomeration (Bishop, 1998). This cultural invasion (Freire, 1970; 2000) disrespects the potentialities of the marginalized group, imposes its own world view onto the lives of that group, and inhibits their creative free expression. Because of their weakened social position, members of the marginalized community begin to internalize the perceptions of them that members of the dominant society put forth (Fiske-Rusciano & Cyrus, 2005; Freire, 1970/2000). In order to reframe the narrative about homelessness in a way that respects the values, needs and perspectives of those individuals experiencing homelessness, this study focused specifically on their voices and their world views.

The perceptions of homeless individuals, referred to earlier in Carla's story, by police, and by potential landlords or employers, are deeply felt by all clients. Their voices reflect

sadness as they struggle to resist internalizing the profile of degeneracy of character they feel is projected onto them. Frank, for example, said police told him he couldn't collect plastic bottles to recycle, even though it was Frank's way of earning food money. When Frank asked him why, he said the officer's reply was "So we can starve you out." That "kind of shows you what we're dealing with," Frank added. Despite the overall positive feelings about the SCC, another client waved a hand over his bin and said, "This is what my life has been reduced to, is a trash can," to which the others around him laughed. "I think the idea is, if you don't show up for your stuff," he went on, "it's already in the garbage." Comments in Table 2 share other reflections on how the dominant society's perception of homeless individuals affect their mental health.

Table 2. Comments on Police and Perceptions

Client	Police and Perceptions
Krystal	You know those community meetings against the homeless a few years back? Commercial Avenue used to be very, very dirty. And since they built this facility? The whole street is clean. Way cleaner than it used to be. It's either, do you want a dirty ass street full of bums or would you like a nice decent street where we can put our stuff away and go about our business? We're not trying to hurt anybody.
Carla	I'm told I look scary. I'm not. I'm misunderstood. At times I've been told I'm rude and I'm not meaning to be, I think it's my autism. I kind of say what I feel, what I think, and sometimes it's not appropriate. So, I'm trying to work on that.
Frank	It's not what it would look like, it's how you would be treated. Instead of being looked at like a commodity or a number to bring in money, to look at people for who they are. For the individual, for their individual needs, and instead of grouping everyone into one generic category, and using one-size-fits-all plans. And then if you don't do it their way, they just turn you into a criminal.
Eyes	I worked security. The amount of money I was getting paid, it wasn't enough to get me over the hump. I would be right there at the door of stability, and then something, that in some cases people might consider to be minor, happened, and boom. Right back down.
Clifton	If you have to carry your duffel bag everywhere you go, you can't find a job. I have to somehow bring this bag of blankets with me to my jobs, without them wondering, why are you bring blankets to work? I told them my other job is at ACE parking and the garage is cold overnight.

Client	Police and Perceptions
Maria	Last year I had a job; making \$12 an hour, but I was at the overnight shelter. I was going in, sleeping a few hours, taking showers like at 10 or 11 at night cuz there was a lot of families trying to get a shower. And I had to get up at 5 a.m. with the kids. So, my performance was slipping. They didn't understand why I was always tired.
Cheryl	When you're not carrying stuff, it frees you up to do the things people do, without judgement, without drawing attention to yourself. It's a lot easier to find your way back into society.
Cassandra	I had a place; and they wouldn't renew my lease because it was a VA Section 8 thing and I had a couple of my grandkids staying with me, which is taboo. Would they rather have my grandkids on the street?
Tony	I'm 59 and just had heart surgery. I have two torn rotator cuffs. I move slow; I have sleep apnea and pain meds. Every time I sit down to rest, someone tells me I can't sit there.
Lara	The cops have been really harsh on homeless people lately. My husband kept his stuff in a shopping cart, and he went to jail. I was trying to get his stuff out of the cart and bring it here, and like five cop cars swarmed up on us! Honestly, they were just being dicks about it.

Implications

The narrative stories provided by clients and staff at Storage Connect Center indicate the clients' physical mobility, generated by securing their belongings at the storage facility, creates space in the clients' lives for them to make choices that can positively impact their quality of life. In addition, unanticipated data reveal that the psychological transformations resulting from using the storage facility have equally impactful consequences, positively affecting their mental health and self-esteem. This study therefore raises the question, how can this new information be useful in reframing approaches to assisting unsheltered individuals? Results from this study can serve as a foundation for further research, e.g. a study using identical methodology at the other storage facility in San Diego, as well as a study involving San Diego's homeless who do not use the storage facility and consequently must carry their belongings with them everywhere. Looking into whether other cities have created similar facilities could provide an opportunity to do a

cross-case analysis study. All of these avenues for further research could yield valuable knowledge that has the potential to reframe the approach to both problems and solutions involving America's growing homeless population.

Ideally, a follow-up study with the same individuals interviewed for this research could provide detailed data about their lives, specifically the long-term results of having a storage unit. Given the transitory nature of a homeless lifestyle, this limitation makes follow up implausible. Likewise, being able to validate the stories they have shared is not possible, nor is it the purpose of this study to interrogate, then validate their stories. The realities they shared are the ones they are living, and the intent of this study was to learn about those realities.

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