The Racial Disparities Between Homeless Youth  
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**BACKGROUND**
- According to Greater Cincinnati Homeless Coalition, it was reported in 2015 that of people experiencing homelessness, about 66% were African American/Black (Fact Sheet, 2016).
- Homelessness is not a stand-alone issue. African Americans/Blacks have faced systemic, structural, and institutional racism since slavery.

**IMPORTANCE TO SOCIAL WORK**
- Understanding what factors play a role in African American/Black homelessness will lead to culturally competent practice.
- Understanding why homelessness disproportionately affects African American/Black youth can have an influence on macro practice, and decrease the gap in rates of homelessness.

**PURPOSE**
- The purpose of this research study is to identify factors that play a role in African American/Black youth homelessness.
- The purpose of this study is to evaluate the rate at which African American/Black youth experience homelessness compared to their white peers.

**PARTICIPANTS**
- Age: 10-17
- Criteria: Youth who came and completed the intake process at Mecum House (Mecum House clients)
- Dates: 3/15/2020 through 10/15/2020 and 1/18/2021 through 3/18/2021

**METHODS**
- Type of Study: Exploratory, qualitative and quantitative
- Demographic information is collected for all youth served by Mecum House through the intake process
- Interviews with youth will be conducted
- Exit surveys are given to youth

**DATA ANALYSIS**
- After collecting all of the data, graphs were created to show the data
- Software used includes Microsoft Excel and Clarity (a system used by Lighthouse Youth and Family Services – the parents of Mecum House)
- Results of the interviews were qualitatively analyzed
  - Looking for patterns and similarities between interviews with youth based on race

**RESULTS**
- Between 3/15/2020 and 10/15/2020:
  - 71% of clients were Black or African American
  - 67% of clients were previously staying or living with a family member
- Between 1/18/2021 and 3/18/2021:
  - 36% of clients were in custody of JFS
  - All clients not enrolled in school were Black or African American
  - 62% of Black or African American clients were brought in by police
- Factors influencing homelessness:
  - Family violence
  - Police involvement
  - Access to education

**DISCUSSION**
- Mecum House serves Black and African American youth at a disproportionate rate
- Black and African American youth are more likely to have police involvement
- Black and African American youth are more likely to runaway or be removed for safety reasons
- The most common reason there is police involvement is a domestic violence issue
- It is more likely for Black and African American youth to return to homelessness

**CONCLUSION**
- Systemic racism impacts youth homeless in many areas including, but not limited to,
  - Policing
  - Generational poverty
  - Schooling
  - Housing
- Interventions need to target the system, not just the individual
- Further research about interventions for Black and African American homeless youth needs to be conducted

**LIMITATIONS**
- The data collected is coming strictly from Mecum House in Cincinnati, Ohio
- Since some data is going to come from interviews, it is possible that subjects will not be completely honest, so the data may be biased

**REFERENCES**