Reactions to Homelessness: Social, Cultural, and Psychological Sources of Discrimination
Brooks J. Baumgartner, Lisa M. Bauer, and Khanh Van T. Bui
Pepperdine University

ABSTRACT. This study examined social, cultural, and psychological sources of prejudice toward homeless people. Six potential predictor variables were taken into consideration: belief in a just world, individualistic orientation, collectivistic orientation, and causal attributions made toward homelessness (including locus, stability, and controllability). The outcome variable was attitudes toward homeless people. In terms of zero-order correlations, belief in a just world, collectivism orientation, locus, and controllability were all significantly correlated with attitudes toward homeless people. A simultaneous multiple regression also revealed that the six variables (minus the causal attribution of stability due to its low internal consistency) accounted for 28.7% of the variance in attitudes toward homeless people, with the causal attribution of locus emerging as a significant predictor.

The issue of homelessness creates division and provokes a wide array of responses. For some, the suffering of the poor evokes compassion and sympathy, leading them to a life of service and care of those in need, whereas others have a tendency to blame the poor and even go as far as rebuking government support for creating dependence (Flanagan & Tucker, 1999; Sidel, 1996). The current study set out to explore the forces that influence how one responds to homeless people. To understand the underlying factors that influence one’s response to homelessness, it is important to review the findings of past research. Past literature has identified a number of social, cultural, and psychological factors that shed light on the conflicting responses to homeless people.

Social Factors
There are many social and systemic forces that foster a negative response toward the poor. It should be briefly noted that any mention of “the system” or “systemic forces” throughout this article is referring to the political agencies which create policies and laws to regulate society. Sidel (1996) analyzed the rhetoric of political leaders who were attempting to dismantle the federal welfare system and discovered a tendency to blame and demonize women who were poor to divert attention from the persistence of poverty as a fundamental aspect of society. Sidel proposed that leaders refuse to admit societal and systemic causes of poverty because of their desire to maintain the status quo and the fear of invalidating the current political system. These results suggest that political leaders are fully aware that if the poor cannot be blamed for their own suffering, then the system itself would come under question and calls for reform would be made.

Sidel’s findings are supported by a study conducted by Flanagan and Tucker (1999). In latter study, adolescents (ages 12–18) were presented with a number of open-ended questions about unemployment, poverty, and homelessness. After responding to these questions, participants were asked to answer a number of questions about the American system of government. Trained scorers (who were unaware of the research hypotheses) coded the answers to the first set of questions for references to internal and external causes. Flanagan and Tucker found significant positive correlations between participants’ tendencies to endorse internal causes of unemployment, poverty, and homelessness and their likelihood to believe that the American system offered equal opportunities to all citizens. Participants who endorsed internal
causes were also more likely to rebuke government support for causing dependence amongst the poor. These findings suggest that individuals who place more faith in the American system also have a tendency to attribute poverty to the internal characteristics of the poor themselves. Harper, Wagstaff, Newton, and Harrison (1990) sought to explore the relationship between belief in equal opportunity and concern for the poor on a larger scale. Instead of measuring participants’ faith in a national system, Harper et al. examined the relationship between the belief in a fair and just world and views of poverty in Third World countries. The researchers found that there was a significant positive correlation between belief in a just world and the tendency to blame the poor for poverty.

**Cultural Factors**

In addition to social factors, the current study also sought to investigate how cultural factors influence views of homeless people. Past research has shown that individuals from more collectivistic cultures, such as those in East Asia, tend to make situational attributions for behavior as compared to those from more individualistic cultures, who tend to make dispositional attributions. Morris and Peng (1994) examined the different attributions made by American and Chinese journalists when reporting similar stories. The researchers analyzed two similar news stories where a man (who felt mistreated by his supervisor) had shot and killed his supervisor and several bystanders. In the American account, speculations were made about the murderer’s mental instability, while the Chinese account speculated about the situational and societal factors that may have played a role in the shooting. These findings suggest that people in individualistic cultures focus more on dispositional factors when interpreting behavior, whereas those in collectivistic cultures focus more on situational factors.

However, the assumption that all members of individualistic cultures make dispositional attributions about behavior seems to be an overgeneralization. Triandis, Leung, Villareal, and Clack (1985) found that just as cultural groups differ in their levels of individualism and collectivism, so do individuals. Triandis et al. developed a 29-item scale to measure differences in individualism and collectivism orientation at the individual level. Using this scale, the researchers examined the impact of individualism and collectivism orientation on the importance assigned to common values.

Among other things, the researchers found that participants who scored higher on individualism were more likely to emphasize values of competition, whereas participants who scored higher on collectivism were more likely to emphasize values of cooperation.

**Psychological Factors**

While some researchers have investigated social and cultural factors that influence one’s response to poverty, the majority of the empirical literature has focused on individual and psychological factors that shape these responses. To create a framework to help organize and explain how interpretations are made about behaviors and situations, social psychologists have developed attribution theory. Attribution theory is founded on the notion that individuals have a tendency to attribute causes to behavior in order to make sense of their surroundings. Past research has shown that perceived causes about success and failure share three common properties: locus, stability, and controllability (Weiner, 1985). Causes can be internal or external to the actor (i.e., locus), varying or unvarying over time (i.e., stability), and controllable or uncontrollable by the actor (i.e., controllability). Past research has shown that all three of these causal dimensions have a unique impact on the interpretation of success and failure (Hareli & Hess, 2008). The three dimensions of attribution theory were addressed separately in the current study.

**Locus.** When interpreting specific behaviors, causes can be attributed to internal factors (e.g., the disposition of the actor) or external factors (e.g., the restraints of the situation). In terms of homelessness, it seems logical that individuals who attribute homelessness to internal factors would be more likely to blame the homeless for their plight, whereas individuals who attribute homelessness to external factors would be more likely to blame the system in general. As a result, individuals will be more sympathetic and compassionate toward homeless people if they attribute homelessness to external circumstances. However, the fundamental attribution error (FAE) distorts an individual’s ability to objectively interpret the locus of behavior. The FAE is the tendency of an observer to attribute another person’s behavior to internal and personal characteristics, while ignoring external and situational restraints (Gute, Eshbaugh, & Wiersma, 2008). For example, Tal-Or and Papirman (2007) found that participants who viewed a clip from a film tended to attribute the actions of characters
in the film to the personality characteristics of the actors who played the characters as opposed to the external restraints of the script the actors were reading. In another study, Cowley (2005) found that observers of service encounters have a tendency to commit the FAE by attributing outcomes of encounters to dispositions of the service providers as opposed to situational restraints (such as a computer crash or a rush of customers). Dunwoody (2006) has even made the claim that the entire field of cognitive psychology is guilty of the FAE because of its asymmetric-organismic focus and disregard of the environment in explaining behavior.

In terms of the current research topic, one of the most applicable studies involving the FAE was conducted by Weigel, Langdon, Collins, and O’Brien (2006). In this study, staff members in a learning disability treatment center were asked to fill out attributional questionnaires about a client who displayed challenging behaviors (e.g., screaming, throwing objects, excessive hand-washing) and a client who did not display challenging behaviors. The study revealed that staff members were significantly more likely to attribute behavior to internal characteristics for the client who displayed challenging behaviors. There was also a significant positive relationship between internal attributions and critical comments made about clients. These results are relevant to the current study because homeless individuals often display challenging behaviors themselves, such as stealing, begging, and sleeping in public. As a result, observers may be even more likely to commit the FAE (attribute homelessness to internal causes) when dealing with homeless people.

Stability. Another causal dimension that influences the interpretation of behavior is the stability of observed traits and characteristics. People are less likely to offer aid or support to an individual if they believe that attitudes and situations are stable and unlikely to change (Karafantis & Levy, 2004). Interestingly, the common conception of attitudes as enduring evaluative tendencies, stable across both time and situation, creates a fixed view of human traits. As a result, the potential for growth, change, and betterment is reduced and restricted. In contrast to this view, Schwarz (2007) advocates construal models that treat attitudes as evaluative decisions made on the spot and based on situational and contextual factors.

If individuals view attitudes and human traits as malleable and capable of change, it seems likely that there would be a greater motivation to invest time and resources to provide support for those in need. Karafantis and Levy (2004) sought to test this hypothesis by recruiting 244 fifth- and sixth-grade students to complete questionnaires about the malleability of human traits and their attitudes toward homeless children. The results revealed a significant correlation between belief in the malleability of human traits and positive attitudes toward homeless children. Furthermore, children with a malleable view of human traits also held a more positive attitude toward homeless children.

Controllability. The third causal dimension that influences the interpretation of behavior is the controllability of the actor. Negative behavior that is viewed as controllable by the actor is more likely to evoke blame and less likely to encourage compassion. Hegarty and Golden (2008) found that participants possessing prejudices toward a stigmatized group produced a number of causal thoughts that implied the controllability of the stigmatized trait. For example, if participants possessed a prejudice toward alcoholics, they were more likely to produce causal thoughts that implied that alcoholism was a controllable trait. In this way, participants tried to justify their prejudices by making their expression seem less offensive.

Sometimes attributions about the controllability of poverty are not overtly spoken but implied. Karniol (1985) found that children in elementary school often believe that becoming rich is a choice and, therefore, a controllable characteristic. However, this tendency to view wealth attainment as a choice can indirectly foster a derogation of the poor. If becoming wealthy is seen as a choice, then the assumption is made that the poor have simply chosen not to become rich, thus making them undeserving of sympathy or support.

Overview of the Current Study and Hypotheses
Past researchers have identified social (i.e., belief in a just world), cultural (i.e., individualism and collectivism orientation), and psychological (i.e., causal dimensions of locus, stability, and controllability) sources of prejudice toward disadvantaged individuals. Despite the extensive research conducted in these areas, there were a number of opportunities for past findings to be applied in a new context. While much attention has been paid to the broader issue of poverty, the goal of the current study was to investigate factors
that influence attitudes toward homeless people specifically. To better understand the relevance and significance of the current study, it is important to expand upon the gaps in past literature.

Harper et al. (1990) found that belief in a just world was positively correlated with a tendency to blame the poor for poverty in Third World countries. However, their finding has not been replicated to see if belief in a just world is significantly correlated with negative attitudes toward homeless people in one’s own country. *Belief in a just world hypothesis:* Participants with a stronger belief in a just world would have more negative attitudes toward homeless people.

Past research has shown that people from individualistic cultures are more likely to refer to dispositional traits when explaining behaviors, whereas people from collectivistic cultures are more likely to focus on situational factors (Morris & Peng, 1994). As a result, people from individualistic cultures are more likely to blame the individual, whereas people from collectivistic cultures are more likely to blame the system. From these findings, it seems reasonable to predict that people who score higher on individualism would be more likely to blame homeless people for their situation, whereas people who score higher on collectivism would be more likely to blame the system for creating homelessness. It should be noted that, while individualism and collectivism are related, they are still independent measurements and not opposing ends of a single spectrum. *Individualism hypothesis:* Participants’ individualism scores would positively correlate with negative attitudes toward homeless people. *Collectivism hypothesis:* Participants’ collectivism scores would negatively correlate with negative attitudes toward homeless people.

As a whole, there has been a great deal of research conducted on attribution theory and its many applications. However, no study has addressed the unique impact that each of the three causal dimensions of locus, stability, and controllability has on attitudes toward homeless people. In terms of locus, past research has shed light on the prevalence of the FAE across situations and scenarios, but researchers have yet to address how the FAE influences attitudes toward homeless people specifically. However, Weigel et al. (2006) found that staff members who made more internal attributions regarding clients with learning disabilities were more likely to make critical comments toward their clients. These results suggest that individuals who make more internal attributions about homelessness would be more likely to hold negative attitudes toward homeless people in general. *Locus hypothesis:* Participants who make more internal attributions about the causes of homelessness would have more negative attitudes toward homeless people.

In terms of stability, Karafantis and Levy (2004) found that children who held more malleable views about human traits expressed more positive attitudes toward homeless children. In other words, individuals who believed that human traits were stable (implying that people were unlikely to change) were more likely to have negative attitudes toward homeless people. However, the result of that study still needs to be replicated with an adult sample. *Stability hypothesis:* Participants who make more stable attributions about the causes of homelessness would have more negative attitudes toward homeless people.

Individuals often make causal attributions about the controllability of stigmatized traits to justify prejudices toward stigmatized groups (Hegarty & Golden, 2008). However, past research has not explored the relationship between controllable causal attributions and prejudice toward homeless people specifically. It seems reasonable to predict that causal attributions about the controllability of homelessness could be used to justify prejudice toward homeless people. *Controllability hypothesis:* Participants who make more controllable attributions about the cause of homelessness would have more negative attitudes toward homeless people.

**Method**

**Participants**

The sample consisted of 100 undergraduates (74 women, 26 men) from a conservative, Christian university in Southern California. All of the participants were enrolled in introductory level psychology courses and received one hour of research credit for their participation. This level of credit fulfilled 25% of their required research hours. The average age of participants was 18.8 years (SD = 1.04), and the racial breakdown of the sample was 73.6% White American, 16.5% Asian American, 5.5% African American, 2.2% American Indian/Alaska Native, and 2.2% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander.

**Materials**

**Demographic questionnaire.** All participants completed a demographic questionnaire about their biological sex, age, race, and ethnicity.
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Global Belief in a Just World Scale. The Global Belief in a Just World Scale (Lipkus, 1991) is a 6-item, 6-point Likert-type measure where 1 = strongly disagree and 6 = strongly agree. Participants were asked to rate their level of agreement or disagreement with items such as “I feel that people get what they are entitled to have” and “I basically feel the world is a just place.” A meta-analysis conducted by Hellman, Muilenburg-Trevino, and Worley (2008) found that the Global Belief in a Just World Scale had a mean reliability coefficient of .81 for the 20 studies that reported internal consistency. The internal consistency was .84 for the current study. The raw scores for this measure were averaged and converted to mean scores to make the scores easier to interpret and understand.

Individualism-Collectivism Scale. The Individualism-Collectivism Scale (Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995) was used to measure individualism and collectivism orientation. The Individualism-Collectivism Scale is a 32-item, 9-point Likert-type measure where 1 = strongly disagree and 9 = strongly agree. The scale is divided into two subscales, with 16 items measuring individualism (e.g., “It annoys me when other people perform better than I do”) and 16 items measuring collectivism (e.g., “I usually sacrifice my self-interests for the benefit of my group”). Robert, Lee, and Chan (2006) performed a cross-cultural analysis of the Individualism-Collectivism Scale with participants from the United States, Singapore, and Korea and found reliability coefficients ranging from the .60s to the .80s. The current study confirmed these results by producing a Cronbach’s alpha of .82 for the individualism subscale and a Cronbach’s alpha of .78 for the collectivism subscale. Raw scores for this measure were averaged and converted to mean scores to make the scores easier to interpret and understand.

Revised Causal Dimension Scale. Locus, stability, and controllability were all measured using the Revised Causal Dimension Scale (McAuley, Duncan, & Russell, 1992). The original measure consists of four subscales: locus, stability, personal controllability, and external controllability. However, because the scale was applied to the behavior of homeless people instead of personal behavior, the external controllability subscale was not included in the present study. As a result, the Revised Causal Dimension Scale consisted of nine items, with three items measuring locus, three measuring stability, and three measuring personal controllability. McAuley et al. conducted four studies using the Revised Causal Dimension Scale and found adequate levels of internal consistencies across the three subscales: locus = .67, stability = .67, and personal controllability = .79. The current study found internal consistencies of .74 for locus, .50 for stability, and .90 for personal controllability. Given the poor internal consistency for stability, this subscale was dropped from subsequent analyses. The raw scores for the subscales of locus and personal controllability were averaged and converted to mean scores to make the scores easier to interpret and understand.

Attitudes Toward Homelessness Inventory. The Attitudes Toward Homelessness Inventory (Kingree & Daves, 1997) is an 11-item, 6-point Likert-type measure where 1 = strongly agree and 6 = strongly disagree. Higher scores on this measure represent more positive attitudes toward homelessness. Sample items include “I feel uneasy when I meet homeless people” and “Most homeless persons are substance abusers.” The measure consists of four subscales: belief that homelessness has societal causes, belief that homelessness is a solvable problem, willingness to affiliate with people who are homeless, and belief that homelessness is caused by personal characteristics. However, past research has combined scores on all four subscales to create an overall measure of attitudes toward homelessness (Buchanan, Rohr, Kehoe, Glick, & Jain, 2004). The present study followed this precedent and used the combined score of the four subscales to serve as the outcome variable. Kingree and Daves (1997) found a Cronbach’s alpha of .72 for the overall measure. The current study found a Cronbach’s alpha of .62 for the overall measure; although this value was not excellent, it was neither poor nor unacceptable (see George & Mallery, 2003), so it was kept in subsequent analyses. The raw scores for this measure were averaged and converted to mean scores to make the scores easier to interpret and understand.

Procedure
The five surveys were posted online using the Sona Systems, and participants completed the surveys at a time of their choosing. The surveys were available online over a two-week period. Once 100 participants had completed the study, the surveys were removed from the Sona System. The surveys were presented in the order described in the Materials section: Demographic questionnaire, Global Belief in a Just World Scale, Individualism-Collectivism Scale, Revised Causal Dimension Scale, and lastly,
Attitudes Toward Homelessness Inventory. This order was chosen to avoid priming participants for the topic of homelessness as they completed items on the surveys measuring the predictor variables. Additionally, to avoid social desirability effects that the topic of homelessness might have induced, participants were not allowed to go back to previous questionnaires or change past responses.

Results

Of the total of 100 participants, one was dropped from analyses for failure to respond to the Revised Causal Dimension Scale. All analyses were conducted using IBM® SPSS® v. 19.

A correlation matrix was generated to evaluate the zero-order correlations between each of the five included predictor variables and the outcome variable. As shown in Table 1, attitudes toward homeless people was significantly correlated with collectivism, \( r(97) = .18, p = .04 \); belief in a just world, \( r(97) = -.30, p = .001 \); locus, \( r(97) = -.43, p < .001 \); and controllability, \( r(97) = -.36, p < .001 \). Higher scores on belief in a just world, locus, and controllability were correlated with more negative attitudes toward homeless people, whereas higher scores on collectivism predicted more positive attitudes toward homeless people.

Next, a simultaneous multiple regression revealed that the five predictor variables accounted for 28.7% of the variance in attitudes toward homeless people, \( F(5, 93) = 7.41, p < .001 \), with locus emerging as a significant predictor, \( b = -.08, t(93) = -2.96, p = .004 \), 95% CI \([-1.14, -.03]\) (see Table 2). These results suggest that, controlling for the other four entered variables, individuals who make more internal attributions about the causes of homelessness have more negative attitudes toward homeless people.

Discussion

This study investigated several social, cultural, and psychological sources of prejudice toward homeless people. It was hypothesized that participants who scored higher on belief in a just world, individualism, locus, stability, and controllability would have more negative attitudes toward homeless people, and participants who scored higher on collectivism would have more positive attitudes toward homeless people.

The current study provided support for four of the six hypotheses. The belief in a just world hypothesis was supported, as participants with stronger beliefs in a just world had more negative attitudes toward homeless people. This result is consistent with the research of Harper et al. (1990), who found that individual’s belief in a just world was significantly correlated with a tendency to blame the poor for poverty in Third World countries. It seems that individuals who view the world as fair are more likely to believe that people generally get what they deserve. As a result, people feel less sympathy toward homeless individuals because they believe the homeless are deserving of their situation.

The collectivism hypothesis was also supported, as participants who scored higher on collectivism had more positive attitudes toward homeless people. This result is consistent with the findings that individuals from collectivist cultures are more likely to make situational attributions and blame the system in general (Morris & Peng, 1994). The current results suggest that individuals who score higher on collectivism are more likely to take into account the situational factors that influence homelessness. Because of this situational perspective, individuals are less likely to blame homeless people and more likely to display compassion and concern.

Similarly, the current study found support for the locus hypothesis, as participants who offered more internal causal attributions about homelessness expressed more negative attitudes toward homeless people. This result is consistent with the research of Weigel et al. (2006), who found that staff members who made more internal causal attributions...
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regarding clients with learning disabilities offered more critical comments about their clients. The current results suggest that people who fail to appreciate the influence of outside factors tend to focus primarily on the individual when evaluating the cause of homelessness.

The controllability hypothesis was also supported, as participants who made more controllable attributions about the cause of homelessness expressed more negative attitudes toward homeless people. This result is consistent with the tendency of individuals to make controllable causal attributions to justify their prejudices toward stigmatized groups (Hegarty & Golden, 2008). The current results suggest that individuals who hold the belief that homelessness is a controllable behavior are less inclined to sympathize with homeless people.

A simultaneous multiple regression revealed that the overall model, consisting of five predictor variables, accounted for 28.7% of the variance in attitudes toward homeless people. The causal dimension of locus emerged as a significant predictor of attitudes toward homeless people. This result suggests that, controlling for the other four variables, participants who made more internal attributions about the cause of homelessness were more likely to express negative attitudes toward homeless people. This finding is consistent with past research and the locus hypothesis for this study.

Although the current study found support for four hypotheses, it failed to find support for the remaining two hypotheses. To begin with, the individualism hypothesis was not supported, as participants who scored higher on individualism did not have more negative attitudes toward homeless people. Inspection of the Individualism-Collectivism Scale provides a potential explanation for this finding. The items on the individualism subscale did not relate at all to the issue of homelessness. As a result, no correlation was observed between individualism and attitudes toward homeless people. In contrast, many of the items on the collectivism subscale were indirectly related to homelessness, such as “My happiness depends very much on the happiness of others” and there was a correlation between collectivism and attitudes toward homeless people.

In addition, the current study could not test the stability hypothesis because the measure had poor internal consistency. The Cronbach’s alpha of .50 found in the current study for this measure is lower than the level of α = .67 found in past research (McAuley et al., 1992).

Limitations
A few limitations are worth mentioning. A natural limitation of most research conducted with college students is the nonrepresentational sample from which participants are drawn. Participants were limited to undergraduate students (enrolled in lower division psychology courses) at a conservative, Christian university in Southern California.

The homogeneity of the given sample could have resulted in a lack of variation in responses, more commonly known as a problem in restriction of range of values for study variables. This lack of variation would have made it especially difficult to detect a relationship between variables if a relationship did in fact exist. Nonetheless, the current study found several significant results.

A third limitation of the current study was its reliance and dependence on self-report measures. Oftentimes, self-report measures can be susceptible to potential social desirability effects. Because helping those less fortunate is a socially desirable characteristic, participants might have responded in a manner that did not truly reflect their thoughts and attitudes toward homeless people. Interestingly, despite the fact that participants were selected from a Christian university that actively promotes service to those in need, participants in the current study had lower scores (M = 3.72) on the Attitudes Toward Homelessness Inventory than those reported in past research (M = 4.13), reflecting more negative attitudes toward homeless people (Buchanan et al., 2004).

Future Research
A few suggestions can be made for future research.

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**TABLE 2**

Unstandardized Coefficients (b), Standardized Coefficients (β), and 95% Confidence Intervals for Simultaneous Multiple Regression in Predicting Attitudes Toward Homeless People

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor Variables</th>
<th>Unstandardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Standardized Coefficients</th>
<th>Significance Level</th>
<th>Lower bound</th>
<th>Upper bound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collectivism</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.068</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individualism</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.268</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belief in a Just World</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.101</td>
<td>-.24</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.31</td>
<td>.004</td>
<td>-.14</td>
<td>-.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Controllability</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>-.18</td>
<td>.105</td>
<td>-.09</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although the current study examined social, cultural, and psychological sources of prejudice toward homeless people, it would be interesting to see how these factors influence actual behavior (e.g., discrimination) toward the homeless. Similarly, it would be beneficial to explore the relationship between expressed attitudes and willingness to help homeless people. One possible way to explore this relationship would be to design a study that measures both participants’ attitudes toward homeless people and their treatment of homeless people in a real-world situation. To accomplish this objective, researchers could administer the same four surveys used in the current study and also include an experimental aspect by staging an encounter with a homeless person (in reality a confederate hired by the researcher) and coding participants’ behavior for things like helpfulness and willingness to provide aid. This type of study would allow researchers to measure the influence that social, cultural, and psychological factors have on the actual treatment of homeless people. Furthermore, it would also shed light on the relationship between expressed attitudes toward homeless people and willingness to help homeless people in real-world situations.

**Conclusion**

There are a number of practical implications and real-world applications from the current study. First of all, the current study helped identify a number of factors that relate to attitudes toward homeless people. By bringing these factors to light, one can begin to understand some of the basic sources of prejudice toward homeless people. Similarly, these findings can be used to construct and implement programs that promote willingness to help homeless people.

An example of the potential benefit that such programs can have on attitudes toward homeless people is highlighted in the work of Buchanan et al. (2004). In their study, a group of medical professionals designed a two-week course aimed at improving medical students’ attitudes toward homeless people. The course informed participants about the origins of homelessness and the numerous health complications that homeless individuals often face. The course also gave participants the opportunity to interact with homeless individuals and hear their personal narratives. At the conclusion of the course, researchers found that participants expressed more positive attitudes toward homeless people and a greater desire to volunteer to help homeless people in the future. The findings of the current study could be used to supplement such a course by providing insight about specific factors that influence attitudes toward homeless people.

The current study is unique because it connects and integrates separate findings of past research. In its attempt to explore reactions to homeless people from a more comprehensive perspective, the current study sheds light on the interplay between factors that jointly relate to attitudes toward homeless people. Another contribution of the current study is its focus on the issue of homelessness. Many researchers have explored the influence of belief in a just world, individualism and collectivism orientation, and the causal attributions of locus, stability, and controllability on poverty in general, but the current study expands upon past research by examining the influence of such factors on attitudes toward homeless people specifically.

**References**


**Author Note.** Brooks J. Baumgartner, Department of Psychology, Pepperdine University.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Brooks J. Baumgartner, 375 NE Merle Ct, Hillsboro, OR 97124. E-mail: brooksbaumgartner@gmail.com