RECOVERY IN CONTEXT

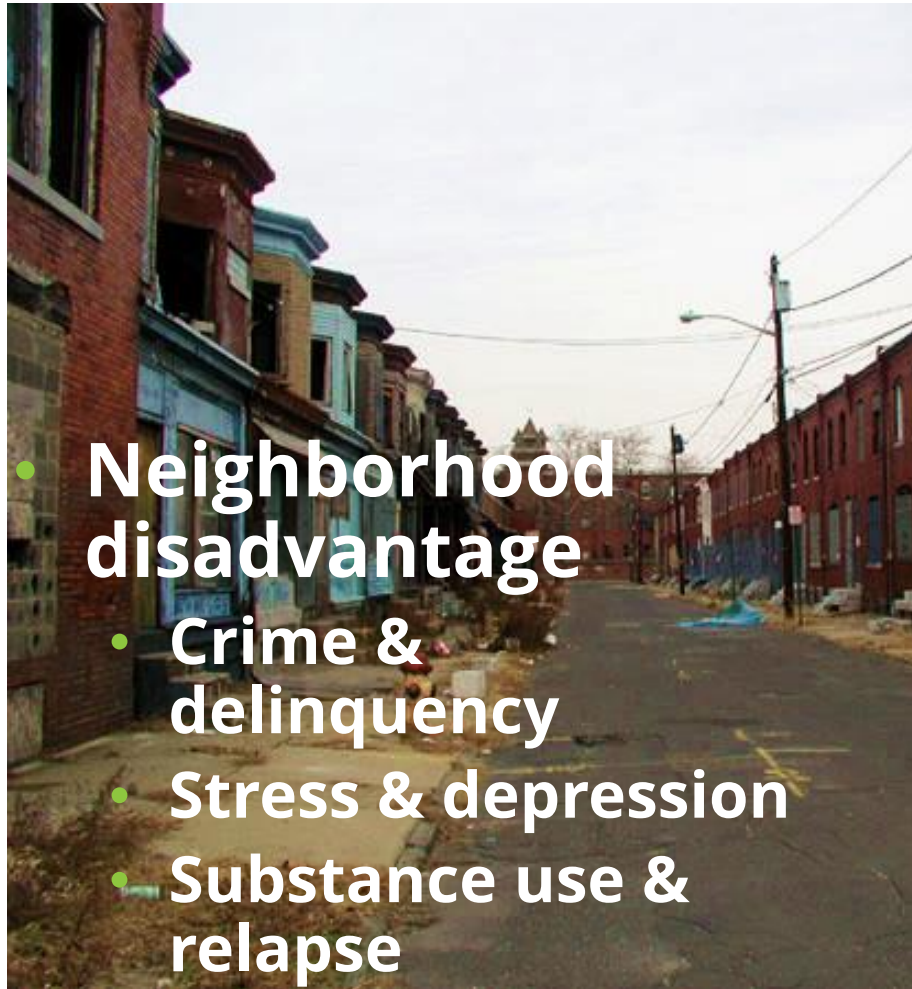The Neighborhood Characteristics of Sober Living Houses

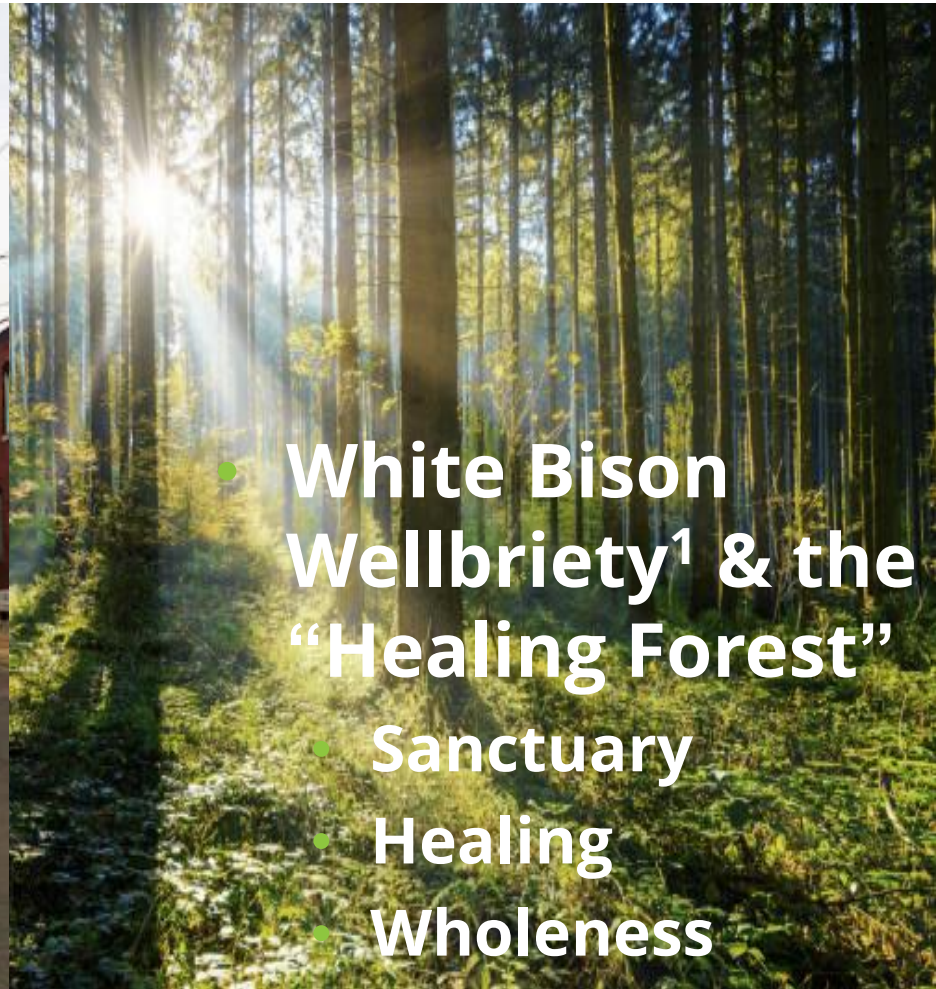Amy A. Mericle, PhD

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ADDICTION & RECOVERY ECOLOGY

- **Neighborhood disadvantage**
  - **Crime & delinquency**
  - **Stress & depression**
  - **Substance use & relapse**

- **White Bison Wellbriety[1] & the "Healing Forest"**
  - **Sanctuary**
  - **Healing**
  - **Wholeness**

[1]Moore, D. & Coyhis, D. (2010). The Multicultural Wellbriety Peer Recovery Support Program: Two Decades of Community-Based Recovery. *Alcoholism Treatment Quarterly, 28*(3), 273-292.

CALIFORNIA SOBER LIVING HOUSES (SLHs)

- SLHs do not provide treatment or formal services, but residents are either encouraged or required to attend 12-step meetings

- Operate based on social model principles emphasizing:
  - Resident input into house operations and management,
  - Experiential knowledge and peer support for recovery,
  - Resident responsibility for maintaining the home

- Residents can stay as long as they wish, provided they abide by house rules and pay monthly fees

- Strong evidence base but heretofore insufficient attention to neighborhood characteristics of SLHs

OBJECTIVES

- Describe the neighborhood characteristics of sober living houses in Los Angeles, County in terms of
  - Socio-demographics
  - Alcohol outlets
  - Recovery resources
  - Accessibility

- Examine differences in these characteristics by:
  - Gender served
  - House size
  - Monthly fees charged

SITES AND PARTICIPANTS

- Houses (N=297) were members of Los Angeles County Coalition of the Sober Living Network

- The Sober Living Network is a nonprofit organization that oversees application, quality control, inspection, and house certification procedures within its county-level coalitions

- The Sober Living Network is an affiliate of the National Alliance for Recovery Residences (NARR) and implements housing standards used in recovery residences across the United States

DATA COLLECTION AND MEASURES

- Lists of member houses were provided to researcher staff between 2017-2018

- Houses were geocoded and linked with:
  - US Census/ACS (2012-2016) data to create socio-demographic measures
  - California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) data to create measures of density & proximity to alcohol (on- and off-premises) outlets
  - SAMHSA Treatment Locator and self-help group meetings to create measures of density & proximity to recovery resources
  - Walk Score® data to measure the walkability of an address and community-level indicators of geographic access to different amenities
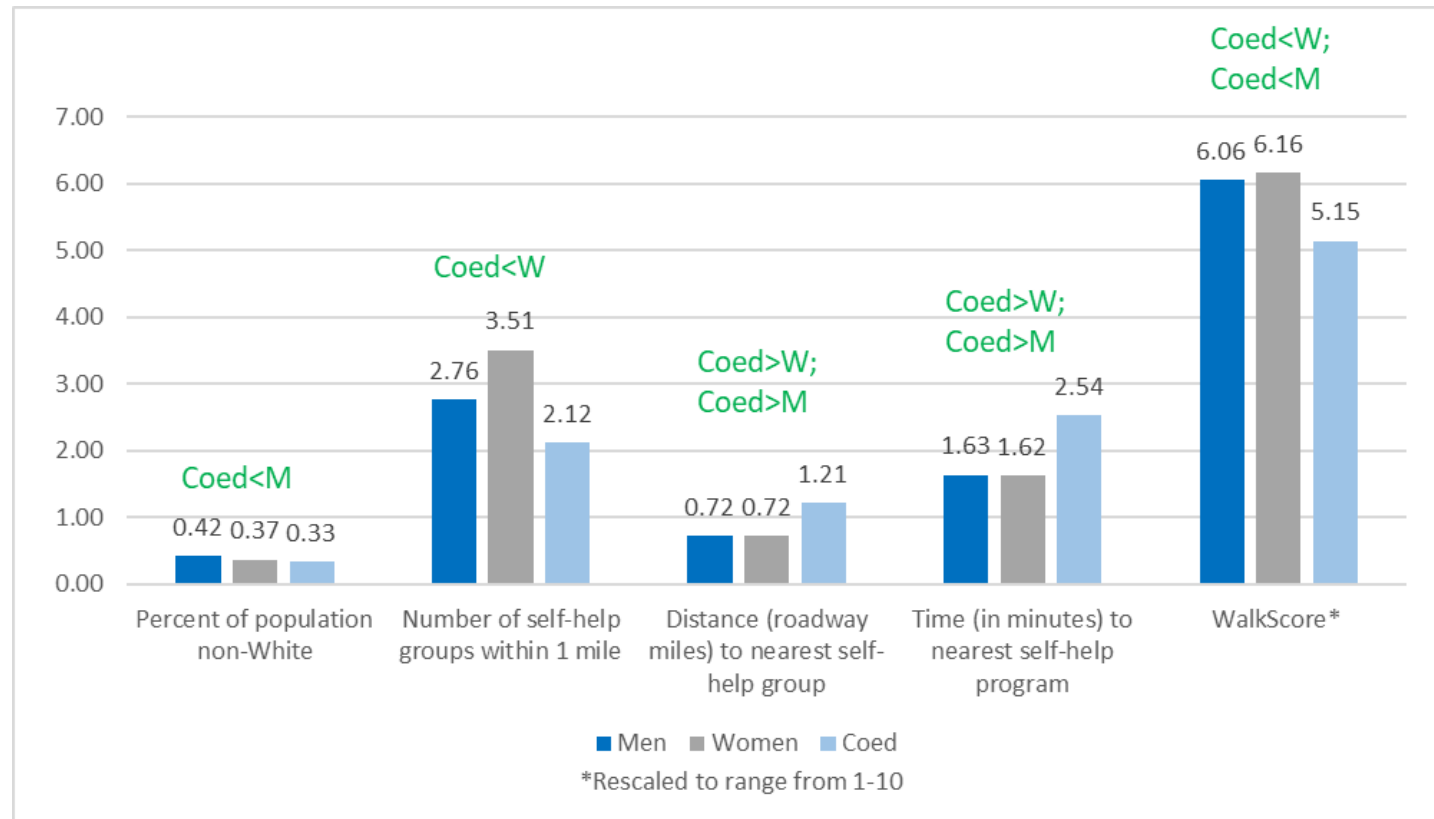
NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTERISTICS

Neighborhood[1] Characteristic	All Houses	
	M	SD
Socio-demographics (N=285)		
Percent of adults (25 or older) who are not high-school graduates	0.17	0.15
Percent of people unemployed (excludes those out of labor force)	0.06	0.03
Percent people below poverty	0.15	0.11
Percent of population non-White	0.38	0.20
Percent housing units renter occupied	0.53	0.25
Alcohol Outlets (N=273)		
Number of off-premises outlets within .5 miles	3.82	3.60
Number of on-premises outlets within .5 miles	5.03	7.40
Number of off-premises outlets within 1 mile	16.06	11.05
Number of on-premises outlets within 1 mile	21.17	23.86
Treatment and Recovery Resources		
Number of treatment facilities within 10 miles	50.15	26.18
Number of treatment facilities within 15 miles	92.10	44.59
Distance (roadway miles) to nearest treatment program	1.19	0.94
Time (in minutes) to nearest treatment program	2.73	2.11
Number of self-help groups within .5 miles	0.85	1.41
Number of self-help groups within 1 mile	2.79	3.12
Distance (roadway miles) to nearest self-help group	0.84	0.78
Time (in minutes) to nearest self-help program	1.84	1.51
Accessibility		
Number of rail stops within .5 miles (N=297)	0.16	0.51
TransitScore (N=238)	48.71	13.42
WalkScore (N=297)	58.85	27.44
BikeScore (214)	59.05	19.41
ParksScore (N=297)	57.10	33.23
GroceryScore (N=297)	61.55	33.57

Notes. [1]Neighborhood is defined as census tract.

- SLHs were located in neighborhoods that were:
  - Largely renter-occupied
  - In close proximity to on- and off-premise alcohol outlets *as well as* treatment & self-help groups
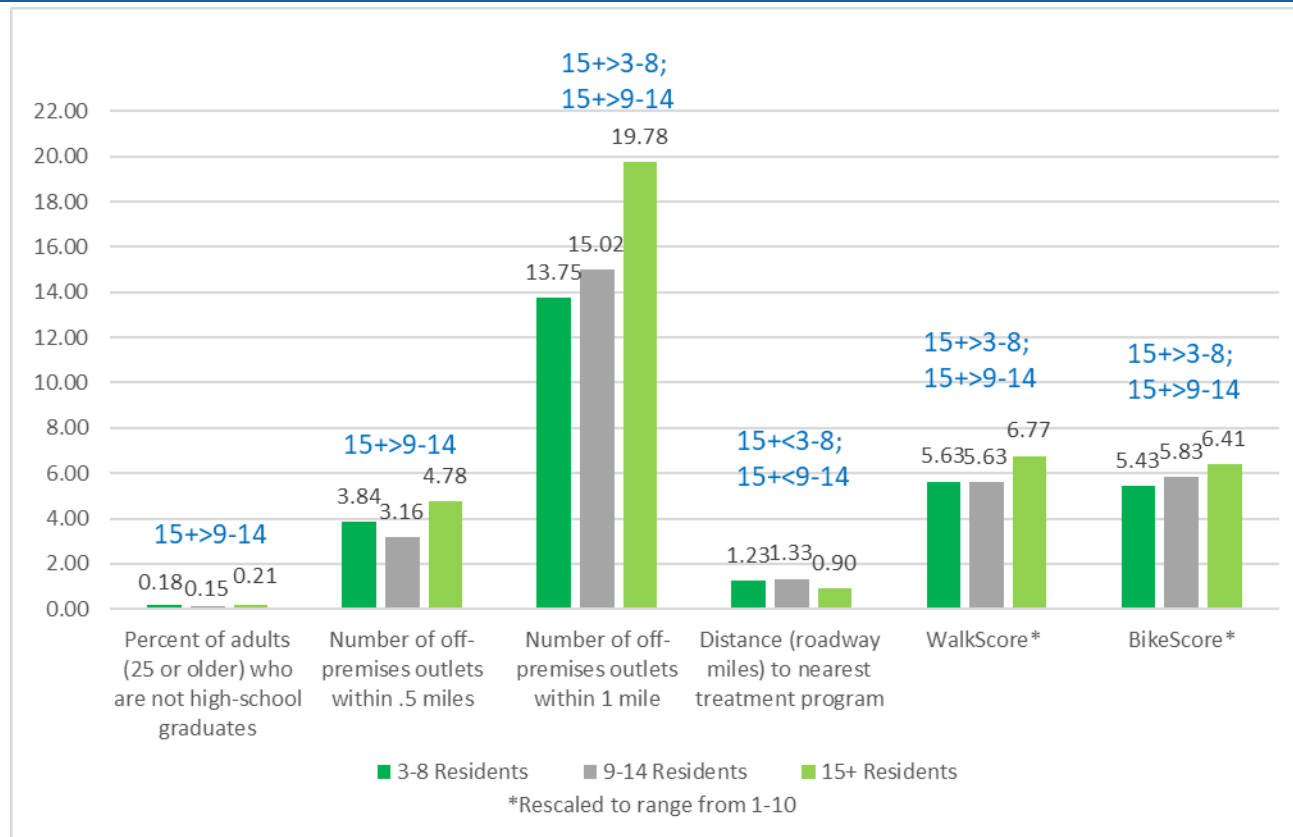 - "Somewhat" walkable and had "Some transit"
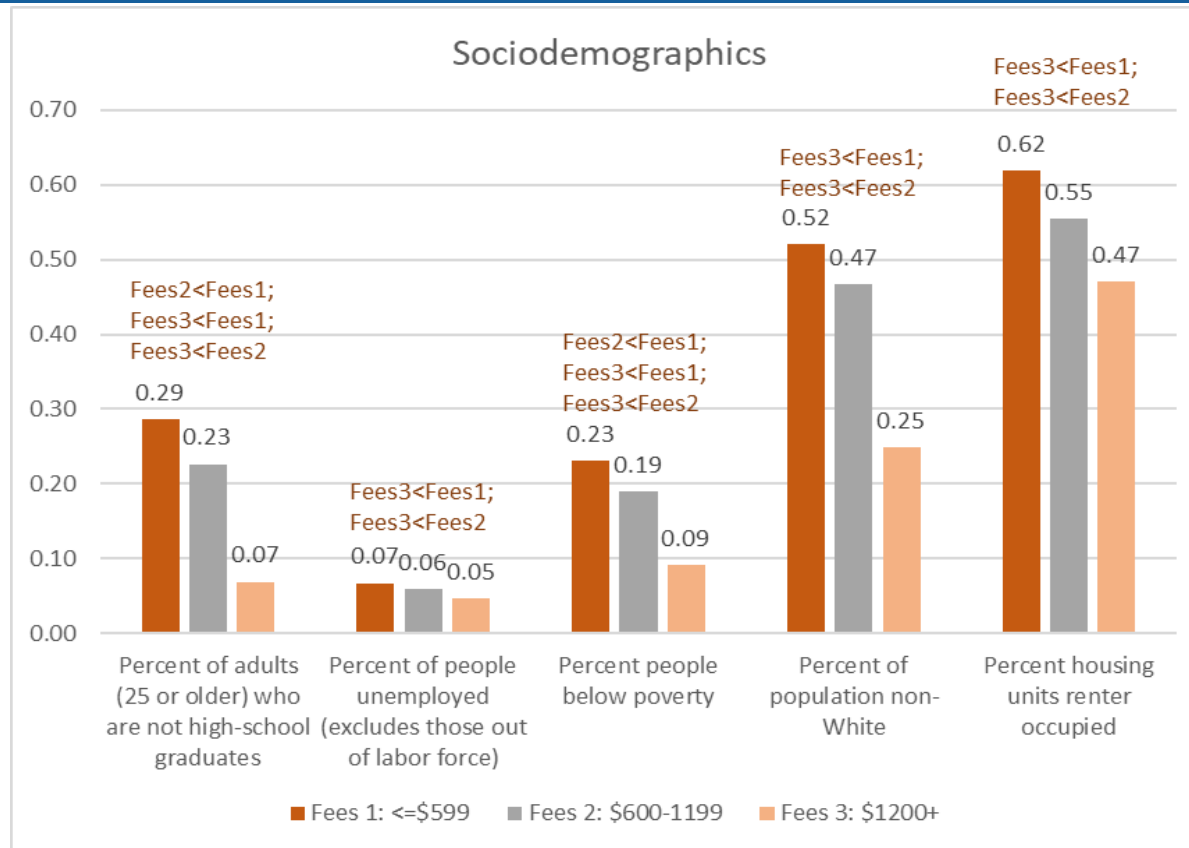
DIFFERENCES BY GENDER SERVED

- Differences in socio-demographics, recovery resources, and accessibility
- Coed houses lowest percent of non-Whites and generally more isolated
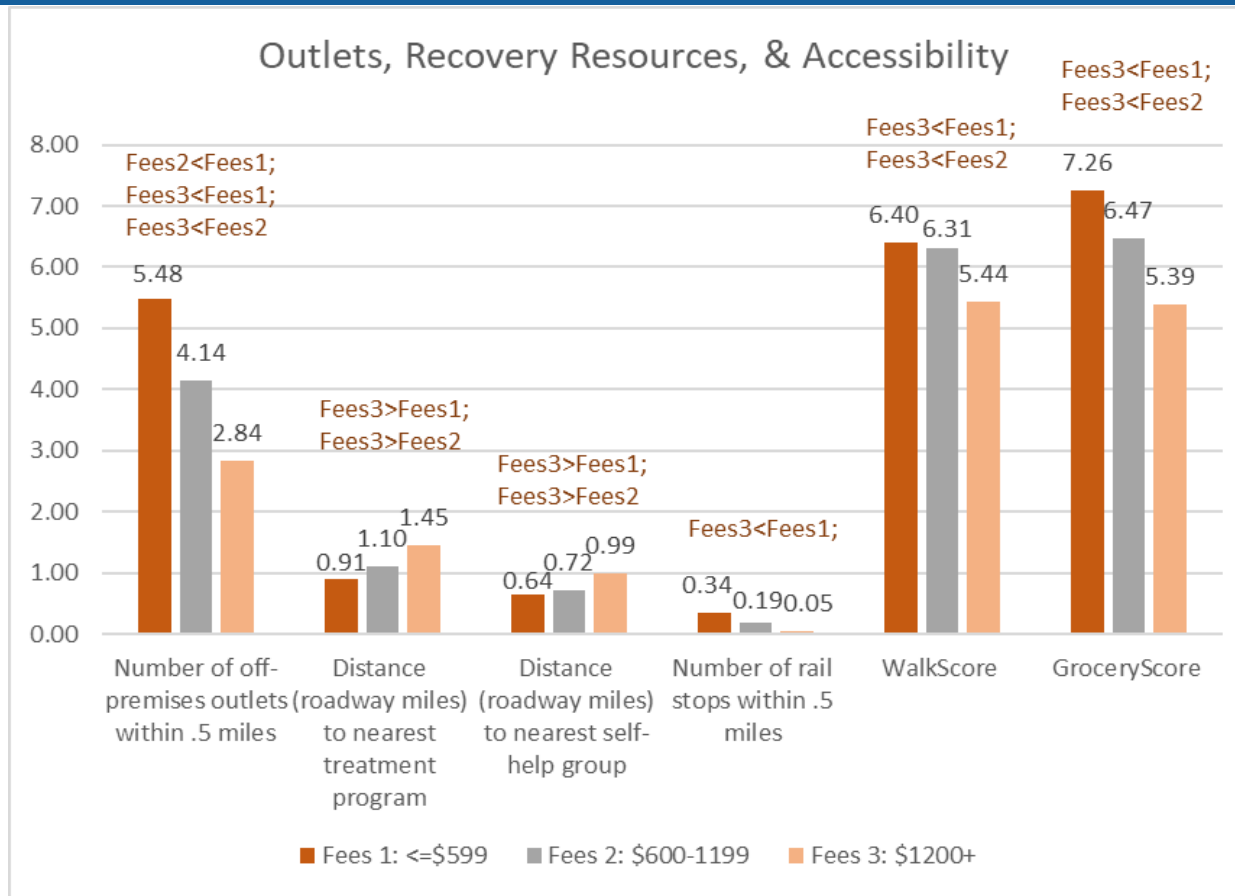
DIFFERENCES BY RESIDENT CAPACITY

- Larger capacity houses were in neighborhoods with:
  - Higher % of adults without HS degree
  - More liquor stores
  - Shorter distance to treatment and greater walk- & bike-ability.

DIFFERENCES BY MONTHLY FEES (1)

Sociodemographics

- Monthly fees strongly associated with socio-demographic characteristics
- Houses charging lower fees associated with indicators of neighborhood disadvantage

DIFFERENCES BY MONTHLY FEES (2)

Outlets, Recovery Resources, & Accessibility

- Houses charging higher fees were more removed from risk & recovery resources

SUMMARY

- Neighborhood factors been found to influence substance use and relapse and could also be critical to helping those in recovery

- SLHs are embedded in a neighborhood context—often with factors that could both positively and negatively affect recovery

- These contextual factors vary by house gender, house capacity, and monthly fees

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- This study was:
  - Limited to houses in LA County and part of the Sober Living Network
  - Only focused on the association between neighborhood and a limited number of house characteristics
- Future work needed to:
  - Focus on how neighborhood characteristics affect *resident outcomes*
  - Study a wider range of recovery residences and residences in varied geographic regions
  - Develop and investigate interventions to help residents manage neighborhood risk
  - Consider community-level interventions and policy research to empirically investigate principles and components of recovery ecology

THANK YOU!!!

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