Abstract
Parents who are unable to provide for their families in a typical manner such as developing their own routines, providing consistent meals and material possessions, and having a place of their own often experience a sense of failure with the loss of these parenting roles (Baynard & Graham-Bermann, 1995; Bassuk, Rubin, & Lauriat, 1986, Thrasher & Mowbray, 1995). Deprivation in the aforementioned areas may compromise the development of the parent, the child, and the functionality of the family unit. Family routines are often disrupted due to the structure and regulations established within the homeless shelters as well. The purpose of this study was to perform a qualitative investigation of the relationship between mothers and their children living in a homeless shelter in order to better understand how the shelter environment may influence the mother's role and her parenting abilities.

Methodology
In this qualitative phenomenological investigation, occupational therapy graduate students facilitated 60-minute parenting groups once a week for 11 weeks at a family shelter in the Silicon Valley. Seven mothers at least 18 years old and caring for at least one child at the shelter were recruited from the parenting groups to participate in the study. Researchers used semi-structured questions to conduct seven interviews, one pilot interview and six primary interviews, with a different mother each week. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. Interview data was analyzed weekly using the Empirical, Phenomenological, and Psychological method (EPP; Guidetti, Asaba, & Tham, 2009). All data was analyzed again a final time to interpret the data, converge multiple perspectives, and create meaningful codes and themes across participants.

Results
Results showed that the mothers experienced elements of both occupational engagement and restrictions on occupational performance while living at the shelter. Areas of occupational engagement included diversity in the mother role, satisfaction of the mother role, shelter support, and the meaning of home. Elements of restricted occupational performance were communicated as loss of control, an unsupportive shelter, discipline of children in a public space, loss of personal space and privacy, and loss of family privacy.

Discussion
The data reveals that the mothers see the shelter as providing supports (physical, temporal, social) that enable them to enhance their participation in meaningful occupations and influence their role as a mother in a positive way. The mothers expressed how shelter routine and structure actually made them feel more independent. While data shows that the shelter did provide a supportive and safe environment for the mothers to engage in meaningful occupations, some mothers expressed feeling a lack of choice and control over certain activities and situations due to certain shelter rules, causing restrictions in occupational performance. Study findings may differ from previous studies of homeless shelters (Ray, 2006) because the current shelter provided a more supportive environment (physical, temporal, social). The contrasting results of the two studies further display how environment has a powerful influence on an individual's role identity. Clinicians can use the study findings and researchers to further benefit this population by exploring ways to provide those same supports to other sheltered environments.
References


Boxill, N., & Beaty, A., (1990). Mother/child interaction among homeless women and their children in a public night shelter in Atlanta, Georgia. *Child and Youth Services, 14*(1), 49-64.


