UCLA
UCLA Electronic Theses and Dissertations

Title
It Takes Us All: Analyzing School Districts' Comprehensive Approaches to Support Students Impacted by Homelessness

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/5vp4q2w7

Author
Edwards, Earl James

Publication Date
2022

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

eScholarship.org Powered by the California Digital Library
University of California

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Los Angeles

It Takes Us All: Analyzing School Districts' Comprehensive Approaches to Support Students Impacted by Homelessness

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements

for the degree Doctor of Philosophy in Education

by

Earl James Edwards

2022

© Copyright by

Earl James Edwards

2022

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

It Takes Us All: Analyzing School Districts' Comprehensive Approaches to Support Students Impacted by Homelessness

by

Earl James Edwards

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2022

Professor Tyrone C. Howard Co-Chair

Professor Pedro A. Noguera Co-Chair

For the past decade, every year at least 1.2 million students in the United States have been identified as homeless. While many youth graduate high school despite experiencing homelessness, a large minority do not complete high school in four years. Not obtaining a high school diploma negatively impacts future opportunities for youth and increases their risk of becoming homeless as adults. This dissertation uses Los Angeles County as a case study to evaluate the formal and informal networks of support that high school students use to meet their academic and physiological needs to remain housed and graduate high school.

This study is guided by three main questions: (1) How does Los Angeles County support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school? (2) How do students in Los Angeles County navigate the barriers of homelessness and successfully graduate high school? (3) How do school districts in Los Angeles County successfully support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school? Data for this study come from 63 interviews with formerly homeless youth, youth experiencing homelessness, teachers,

counselors, principals, district homeless liaisons, community-based organizations, and city and county homeless administrative leaders, as well as school district site observations, and a review of 890 city, county, and state documents. The study considers structural racism when assessing county and school district level strategies that support the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

Major findings speak to a phenomenon this dissertation coins as *Impoverished Institutional Network* (IIN). An impoverished institutional network is defined as a public institution's inability to provide the necessary financial, social, cultural, and organizational capital to adequately support historically marginalized, vulnerable populations, thereby becoming overly reliant on punitive practices or punitive public institutions like the criminal justice and foster care systems to serve those populations. While youth and some school personnel interviewed in this study exhibited a high degree of agency, their efficacy was limited by the networks to which they were relegated.

This dissertation is the first comprehensive study on student homelessness that utilizes a municipal county as the unit of analysis. Additionally, this dissertation introduces IIN as a new construct for assessing a school districts' ability to respond to student homelessness.

Keywords: Student Homelessness, Structural Racism, Youth Homelessness, Urban Education, Race and Homelessness, Black Homelessness

This dissertation of Earl James Edwards is approved.

Marcus A. Hunter

Norweeta G. Milburn

Rashmita S. Mistry

Tyrone C. Howard Committee Co-Chair

Pedro A. Noguera Committee Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2022

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION ... *ii*

COMMITTEE PAGE ... *iv*

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ... *iv*

VITA ... *vi*

CHAPTER 1 OVERVIEW ... *1*

How I Come to this Work ... **1**
Going Home: ... 1
Going Back to School: ... 3

The Educational Debt Owed to Unhoused Youth in Disenfranchised Communities ... **4**
The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ... 7

Approach to Research Inquiry ... **9**

Research Questions: ... **11**

Methods ... **12**

Main Findings ... **13**

Discussion ... **15**

Significance of Study ... **15**

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW ON STUDENT HOMELESSNESS ... *18*

The Rise of Students Impacted by Homelessness ... **18**
Defining Homelessness ... 19

The Psychological and Academic Effects of Homelessness on Students ... **23**
Psychological Impact ... 23
Academic Impact ... 25
Student Mobility ... 25
Chronic Absenteeism ... 26

Exploring Adolescent Homelessness in Different Contexts ... **27**
Doubled-Up Living ... 28
Living on the Streets ... 29
Living in Family Shelters ... 32

Most Vulnerable Student Populations ... **33**
Black Students ... 33
Latino/a Students ... 34
LGBT Students ... 34

The Role of Schools in Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness ... **35**
Educational Policy Supporting Homeless Youth at the District ... 35
The Role of School Sites in Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness ... 37
Teachers' Role ... 38
Parental Involvement ... 39
Partnering with Community Organizations ... 40

Conclusion ... **41**

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN ... *43*

Introduction **43**

Case Study Methodology **45**
Single Embedded Case Study Design 48

Data Collection and Analytical Process **50**
RQ1: How do students in Los Angeles County navigate the barriers of homelessness to successfully graduate high school? 52
RQ2: How does Los Angeles County support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school? 59
RQ3: How do two school districts in Los Angeles County successfully support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?" 63

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework **63**
MTSS Drivers of Success 64

Network Impoverishment as an Overarching Frame **71**

CHAPTER 4 .... ***77***

CONTEXTUALIZING LOS ANGELES COUNTY WITH A STRUCTURAL RACISM LENS ***77***

Introduction **77**

Defining Structural Racism **77**
Examining Los Angeles County with a Racialized Lens 79
Racialized Spaces 81

Contextualizing the Current Racial Disparities in LA County **84**
Segregation and Housing Discrimination Against Black and Latino/a Families 84
Home Ownership Discrimination 84
Racial Restrictive Covenants 86
Reverse Redlining 88
Foreclosures 90
Renter Discrimination 91
Eviction Disparities 93

Employment Discrimination and Income Disparities **94**

Transportation **96**

Racial Discrimination and the Foster Care System **97**

School Pushing Black Youth Experiencing Homelessness into Adult Homelessness **99**

Conclusion **101**

CHAPTER 5 LA COUNTY RESPONSE TO STUDENT HOMELESSNESS ***102***

Introduction **102**

Theme I: County homeless coordinators had limited resources to support school districts. **103**

Theme II: School districts were missing from the table. **108**

Theme II: Misaligned Goals for Addressing Homelessness **110**

The Trickle-Down Approach from City to School Districts **113**

Summary **114**

CHAPTER 6 YOUTH INFORMAL NETWORKS ***116***

Introduction **116**

Theme I: Establishing a Network of Support **116**

Familial Network 117
Communal Network 121
City or County Agency Support 131
Theme I Summary 133

Theme II: Youth Opting Out of Formal School Support **134**

Theme II Summary 137

Theme III: Youth support networks extended beyond their local district. **137**

SPA-hopping for Resources 139
Theme III Summary 145

Theme VI Losing Rights to McKinney-Vento Services **145**

Conclusion **148**

CHAPTER 7 SCHOOL DISTRICT RESPONSE TO STUDENT HOMELESSNESS ***153***

Introduction **153**

Theme I: Six Key Features to Support Students Experiencing Homelessness **153**

Qualified Homeless Liaison 154
Considered Racial, Housing Context, Document Trends when Providing Services 156
Embedded CBO in the School District Department 158
Partnerships with Community 159
Top-down Coherence: From School Board Members to Teachers 163
School District Homeless Service resources Alignment with City and County Resources 167
Theme I Summary 169

Theme II: District's Institutional Network **169**

Inequitable Access to Resources 171
Leaving Richstead to Seek Out Partnerships 174
Lack of Coordination between the Homeless Liaison, School District, and City 176

Conclusion **178**

CHAPTER 8 DISCUSSION ***180***

Introduction **180**

County's Limited Support to Students Experiencing Homelessness **180**

Race, Space, and Services **182**

District Level Strategies **183**

Cultural Wealth and Networks **184**

Impoverished Institutional Networks **186**

Financial Capital: Does an institution have the financial capital to provide the necessary resources to support students experiencing homelessness? 187
Community Partnership: Does an institution have the right community partners to provide the necessary resources to support students experiencing homelessness? 188
Community Cultural Wealth: Can the institution tap into the community cultural wealth of its neighborhood to support students experiencing homelessness? 188
Community Cohesion: Do senior administrators and front-line staff in the institution know their role in supporting students experiencing homelessness? 189
Overreliance on Punitive Public Institutions: Does the institution turn to punitive public institutions to address symptoms of poverty? 190

Significance of this Study 190
CHAPTER 9 CONCLUSION ***193***
Introduction 193
Summary of Major Findings 193
Research Question 1: How does Los Angeles County support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school? 193
Research Question 2: How do students in Los Angeles County navigate the barriers of homelessness and successfully graduate high school? 194
Research Question 3: How do two school districts in Los Angeles County successfully support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school? 195
Overarching Theme 196
Academic Contributions 197
Establishing Impoverished Institutional Network as Conceptual and Analytical Frame 197
Introducing New Stakeholders into Student Homeless Research 198
Limitations and Future Academic Inquiries 199
Policy and Practice Implication 200
County Agencies 200
District Office Recommendations 201
School Site 202
Conclusion: Revisiting the Education Debt 203
APPENDIX ***205***
REFERENCES ***210***

LIST OF FIGURES, MAPS, AND TABLES

FIGURE 1. THE NUMBER OF U.S. PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS, 2004–2017 ... 19
FIGURE 2. PREVALENCE OF RESTRICTION ACROSS CITIES BY OFFENSE CATEGORY ... 31
FIGURE 3. BASIC TYPES OF DESIGNS FOR CASE STUDIES ... 49
FIGURE 4. DISSERTATION CASE STUDY DESIGN ... 50
FIGURE 5. ILLUSTRATION OF YOUTH CODING PROCESS ... 59
FIGURE 6. UNITED STATES HOMEOWNERSHIP RATES BY RACE, ETHNICITY BETWEEN 1940-2018 88

MAP 1: HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX MAP OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY FROM THE A PORTRAIT OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY REPORT (2018) ... 81
MAP 2: HEAT MAP OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY HOMELESS POPULATION FROM LOS ANGELES COUNTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICE (2021) ... 83
MAP 3. HOLC MAP OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY ... 85
MAP 4. SECTION D52 AND C125 OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY HOLC MAP ... 86
MAP 5. A PORTRAIT OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY MAP OUTLINING CHILD WELFARE HOT SPOTS ... 98

TABLE 1. HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS AND ASSISTANCE ELIGIBILITY ... 21
TABLE 2. COMMON LIVING CONTEXT FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS ... 28
TABLE 3. SUMMARY OF STUDY'S ALIGNMENT WITH A RIGOROUS CASE STUDY DESIGN ... 48
TABLE 4. RESEARCH QUESTION, DATA SOURCES, FRAMEWORK ALIGNMENT ... 52
TABLE 5. SUMMARY OF YOUTH ANALYTIC SAMPLE ... 53
TABLE 6. YOSSO (2004) COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH DEFINITION SUMMARY ... 57
TABLE 7. LIST OF MAJOR DOCUMENTS ANALYZED IN DISSERTATION ... 61
TABLE 8. SERVICE PROVIDER AND POLICYMAKERS DATA SUMMARY ... 62
*TABLE 9*A. *RICHSTEAD SCHOOL STAFF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS DEMOGRAPHICS* ... 67
TABLE 10. PARTICIPANTS FROM COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATIONS DEMOGRAPHICS ... 69
TABLE 11. TOTAL NUMBER OF NON-PROFITS REVIEWED IN WESTVIEW AND RICHSTEAD ... 71
TABLE 12. YOUTH PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS ... 73
TABLE 13. NON-YOUTH PARTICIPANT DEMOGRAPHICS ... 75
TABLE 14. SCHOOL DISTRICT DEMOGRAPHICS ... 76
TABLE 15. HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX BY RACE AND ETHNICITY ... 81
TABLE 16. A PORTRAIT OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY DISPROPORTIONALITY RATES BY COMMUNITY CLUSTERS ... 82
TABLE 17. CHARACTERISTICS OF HOME MORTGAGES IN LOS ANGELES COUNTY BETWEEN 2005 AND 2007 ... 90
TABLE 18. THE AVERAGE PAYMENTS REQUIRED AT MOVE-IN FOR EQUALLY AUALIFIED APPLICANTS BY RACE ... 92
TABLE 19. LOS ANGELES COUNTY CHILDREN POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY COMPARED TO CHILD WELFARE SERVICES CHILDREN POPULATION BY RACE AND ETHNICITY ... 99
TABLE 20. LOS ANGELES COUNTY SERVICE PLANNING AREAS DISAGGREGATE BY SCHOOL DISTRICT AND STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS ... 107
TABLE 21. STAKEHOLDERS REPRESENTED AT THE HOMELESS INITIATIVE POLICY SUMMITS ... 109
TABLE 22: YOUTH NETWORK TYPE SUMMARY AND FREQUENCY CHART ... 117

Table 23: Number of Participants that Mentioned Child Protective Services or Criminal Justice System in Interview by Race and Ethnicity 134
Table 24: Summary of Where Youth Participants Received Services 138
Table 25: School and Community-based Programs that Provided Dayon with Resources 142
Table 26: School and Community-based Programs that Provided Alicia with Resources 145
Table 27: Youth Participants Who Knew about MVA and Used MVA Services 146
Table 28. Student Network Types for High School Success with Examples 152
Table 29. Six Strategies Listed as Effective and which Ones Districts Utilized 154
Table 30. Richstead and Westview Liaison Qualifications 155
Table 31: Services Westview USD Offered Students experiencing Homeless 163
Table 32: Richstead and Westview City Comparison 171
Table 33 Richstead Non-profit Organizations Cumulative Gross Assets in 2019 173
Table 34: Partnering Organizations Mentioned in Interviews with Richstead Participants 176
Table 35. Keyword Analysis of the County of Los Angeles Homeless "Compilation of Policy Briefs" 209

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This dissertation uplifts the support systems of youth—those that helped them to meet their needs and excel academically while experiencing homelessness. I would like to acknowledge the folks in my village who supported me during my journey navigating housing insecurity.

I want to acknowledge my mother, Laura Edwards, and father, James Coleman. Despite facing financial hardships, they showed me how to be a loving and generous human being. Growing up, I used to get frustrated when they shared our food with the neighbors, opened our apartment (usually my bedroom) to a family member who needed a place to stay, or lent the little bit of money we had to a friend in need. At the time, I felt that because we had so little, we needed to hold on to all that we could; they taught me that we always have enough to help someone in need.

My brothers Andre, Troy, Derrick, Tony, and Justin were my first friends, and no matter what adversity we encountered, I knew I had at least five people who would weather the storm with me. My youngest brother Evan made my research on education and schools real. Seeing you develop into the young man you are today has been the most inspiring things in my adult life. I am lucky to have all of you as brothers for life.

My extended family held me up when times were the rockiest. Thank you, Uncle James for being my second father. Thank you, Aunt Yvonne Smalls, Aunt Thelma Edwards, Aunt Derika Nealy, Aunt Jovi Codrington, Cousin Dana Smalls, and Mami Evelin Mejia for providing me with shelter as I navigated my childhood and educational pursuits. Thank you, Aunt Irene Smalls, for seeing my potential as a child and connecting me with the A Better Chance

program—ABC changed my life trajectory. I am the product of all your love, commitment, and expectations.

Even though I moved a lot growing up, I was fortunate to always be surrounded by friends who provided the necessary positive peer pressure to push me forward. James Pace and Marcus Mandrell in Quincy kept me out of trouble; Vanessa Bowman, Lauren Tillman, Greg Vaneps, Jamal Ibrahim, Jean Elie, DeMarcus Cofield, Dwight Sankey, Darius Heywood, Bobby Montrond, Richard Johnson, Jimmy Chaudry, Josiah Muhammad, and Brandon Thorpe helped me find community in Brockton. Anthony Bellmon, Gina Riggins, Emily Garcia, Jadeene Gabay, Jonayah Jackson, and Demaris Bailey kept me in school in Williamstown. If I needed a place to sleep, someone to play ball with, a study partner, or someone to vouch for me in school or the neighborhood, I always had a handful of friends to count on. We were all dealing with a high level of adversity, and although the challenges varied—they made me feel normal.

Last, I want to acknowledge my loving wife, Dr. Elianny Edwards. You have been my life partner since we were 15 years old. We attended high school together, went to college down the street, became teachers, moved across the country together, had our beautiful daughter Emory, and now have become doctors. You are my anchor, and I am blessed to have you.

VITA

EDUCATION

M.A., Teachers College, Columbia University, October 2014
Summer Principal Leadership Academy
Thesis Title: *Societal Consciousness and Educational Leadership Course Curriculum*

B.A., Boston College, May 2010
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology

ACADEMIC WORK EXPERIENCE

Interests and Expertise: Educational policy, social justice youth development, youth experiencing homelessness, adolescent mental health, Black and Brown educational and well-being outcomes, qualitative research, community-university partnerships, urban education, housing justice.

Graduate Researcher, University of California, Los Angeles — 2016 - 2022
UCLA Black Male Institute
Graduate Researcher, University of California, Los Angeles — 2016 -2022
UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools
Research Fellow, University of California, Los Angeles — 2020-2021
California Policy Lab
Teacher Assistant, University of California, Los Angeles — Spring, 2019

FUNDED RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

2019-Present PI. *Catching Students in the Margins: Case Study on School Districts Using Multi-Tiered Supports Systems to Support Students Experiencing Homelessness*. Ford Foundation, The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. $72,000.

2018-2019 PI. *Young, Black, Successful, and Homeless: Exploring the Academic Success of Black Students Who Experienced Homelessness*. Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship, University of California, Los Angeles. $20,000

2017 PI. *Hidden Success: Counter Narratives of Former Homeless High School Graduates*. Graduate Research Mentorship Fellowship, University of California, Los Angeles. $6,000

PUBLICATIONS

Peer Reviewed

1. **Edwards, E.J.** (2021). Who are the Homeless? Centering anti-Black racism and the consequences of colorblind homeless policies. *MDPI Social Sciences*. https://www.mdpi.com/2076-0760/10/9/340
2. **Edwards, E.J.** (2020). Listening to formerly homeless youth. Phi Delta Kappan https://doi.org/10.1177/0031721720978069
3. **Edwards, E.J.** (2020). Young, black, successful, and homelessness: Examining the unique challenges of black students who experienced homelessness. Children and Poverty. https://doi.org/10.1080/10796126.2020.1776688

4. **Edwards, E. J.** (2019). Hidden success: Learning from the counternarratives of high school graduates impacted by student homelessness. Urban Education. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085919877928
5. **Edwards, E.J.** (2010). Where alienation happens: The isolation of Black students within predominately white institution. SocialEyes. Boston College. Chestnut Hill, MA.

Books

1. Howard, T. C., Camangian, P., **Edwards, E. J.**, Howard, M., Minkoff, A. C., Orange, T., & Watson, K. T. (2019). All Students Must Thrive: Transforming Schools to Combat Toxic Stressors and Cultivate Critical Wellness. International Center for Leadership in Education

Book Chapters

1. Morton, M., **Edwards, E.J.**, & Kull, M**.** (Forthcoming). Students Experiencing Homelessness: A National Crisis. In J. Bishop (Ed.), Beyond Schools: The Urgency of Reinventing Education Policy in America. New York, NY: Teachers College Press
2. **Edwards, E.J.**, & Edwards, E.C. (Forthcoming). The Black Smugglers of Higher Education: How Black students, scholars, and faculty members disrupt schooling institutions to educate Black youth. In K. Watson, N. Cisneros, L. Pérez Huber, & V. Vélez (Eds.), Like a Path in Tall Grasses: A Handbook of Race and Refusal in Higher Education. Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing
3. **Edwards, E.J.**, & Noguera, P. A. (2021). Seeing our most vulnerable homeless students: The impact of structural racism on the education of black homeless youth in the United States. In K. Seaman & R. Ray (Eds.), Structural racism and the root causes of prejudice. Berkeley, CA: UC Press
4. **Edwards, E.J.**, Hamlin, M., Jahn-Verri, F. Montano, J. & Martinez D.N. (2020). Reparative Records. In A. Roy, R. Rolnik, T. Graziani, & H. Malson (Eds.), Methodologies for housing justice resource guide. Online: https://escholarship.org/uc/item/41g6f5cj

Reports, Policy Briefs, and Popular Press

1. **Edwards, E.J.**, Edwards, E.C., Thompson, D., Stevens, R., Johnson, S. (2021). Reassessing the Homeless Initiative Strategies: Findings from CEO-HI Countywide Community Engagement Sessions. Chief Executive Office of Los Angeles County. Los Angeles, CA.
2. Mathews, K., Leger, M.L., **Edwards, E.J.**, Mauerman, C., Graham, F. (2021). Prioritizing Educator Diversity with New State and Federal Funding. Center for the Transformation of Schools, School of Education & Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles. Online: https://tinyurl.com/PrioritizingEducator
3. Milburn, N., **Edwards, E.J.**, Obermark, D. (2021). Inequity in the Permanent Supportive Housing System in Los Angeles: Scale, Scope and Reasons for Black Residents' Returns to Homelessness. California Policy Lab, University of California, Los Angeles. Online: https://tinyurl.com/CPLBlackRetention
4. **Edwards, E.J.** (2021). "Partnering with Black Community Based Organizations to Address Student Homelessness." SchoolHouse Connections. Washington, DC. Online: https://schoolhouseconnection.org/partnering-with-black-cbos-to-address-student-homelessness/

CHAPTER 1

OVERVIEW

How I Come to this Work

Going Home:

It was the first week of December. I was walking home from the YMCA to my house fifteen minutes away on the east side of Brockton, Massachusetts. It was a typical winter day in New England--the temperature was below thirty degrees and the sidewalks were covered in a slushy mixture of snow, ice, rock salt, and dirt from the boots of people who walked before me.

I could not wait to get home and heat up my frostbitten toes. As soon as I caught a glimpse of my little apartment's Christmas lights on the second floor, I grew excited, sprinted toward the apartment and burst through the front door.

My mom was bent over the living room coffee table crying hysterically. I immediately stopped and asked her why she was crying, but she merely dried her eyes with her shirt and said, "Nothing is wrong," as she feigned preoccupation cleaning the living room table. I ran into my room and asked my older brother. He told me that we were getting evicted for the second time.

Except from the short story *Going Home, 2007*

The excerpt above is from a short story I wrote for Freshman Writing Seminar at Boston College in 2006. This essay was the first time I had ever publicly shared my experience with homelessness. In fact, outside of my girlfriend at the time—now my wife—I had never told anyone of the experience. As an adult looking back, I now realize that my silence was a result of unresolved feelings of shame, anger, guilt, and fear. At the time I did not recognize them as such, but the reality is that I never told my friends because I did not want to be stigmatized. I felt anger towards my parents for being unable to secure housing despite working full-time jobs, and I was fearful of sharing my experience with teachers because I had already lived in foster care and did not want to risk being taken away from my parents again. I wanted an adult at school to talk to, but I did not trust anyone.

While I recognized the struggles that my family endured, to better cope, I normalized them—after all, many people from my neighborhood struggled with issues of poverty. As a result, I grew oblivious to just how much my experience with homelessness had shaped and would continue to shape the course of my life. In retrospect, my experience with youth homelessness was incredibly complex and one of the hardest challenges in my life. However, I fostered a network of people that supported me throughout the experience. For example, during my freshman year of high school, I was living in a family homeless shelter. I met an older Black man named Rodney[1] whose room was next door to mine. Rodney lived in the shelter with his two sons and teenaged daughter as he tried to secure permanent housing as a single father. He was formerly incarcerated and had a very stoic demeanor. To be honest, I was afraid to approach him until one day he invited me to play chess. Every night before bed, Rodney would host a chess tournament for the teenagers living in the shelter. While playing chess, his reserved demeanor would toggle between an animated, competitive trash-talker and a wise teacher. Through those tournaments, I learned how to play chess; more importantly, I was pushed to think strategically and practice patience—skills that continue to pay dividends today.

In the shelter, the woman across the hall—a former English major at Boston University, tutored me in writing because I was too afraid to ask my teachers for help at school. Jasmine was a writer and career substitute teacher in my hometown of Brockton; however, after her husband was unexpectedly laid off, she found herself homeless with her three children, Bryce, Bianca, and Roland. Bryce was 15, Bianca was 12, and Roland was nine years old. For six months Bryce and I navigated living in the homeless shelter together, and he became my best friend. Today,

[1] Rodney, Jasmine, and Bryce are pseudonyms.

Bryce is a senior-level software engineer at a global technology company. I am a proud godfather to his two children, as he is to my daughter.

Meeting Rodney, Jasmine, Bryce, and others during that episode of my homelessness serves as a reminder that people experiencing homeless are not monolithic, and have a range of characteristics, skills, competencies, and strengths that define them besides being homeless. There was one through-line between all the adults who resided in the shelter—they wanted a future of stability and success for their children. In turn, we, the youth, all wanted to ensure that we did not return to the shelter as adults.

Going Back to School:

In 2016, I found myself at the UCLA Graduate School of Education as a doctoral student poised to start my first academic job as a graduate researcher for the Black Male Institute (BMI). Before attending UCLA, I graduated from undergrad, spent five years teaching high school, and received my master's degree in public school leadership. When I arrived at UCLA, my research interests centered on creating pipeline programs for Black and Latino boys that would generate and connect them from a successful academic journey through high school to community college and on to four-year universities.

I had spoken to the director of BMI, Professor Tyrone Howard, about my interest in community college pipeline programs. He was genuinely intrigued and supportive. It was fall quarter of my first year as a PhD student and a fast-approaching deadline forced us to prioritize a research grant exploring the effects of homelessness on students in Los Angeles County. Local news outlets and organizations were buzzing about the increasing number of adults experiencing homelessness, but very few advocates and outlets addressed the children and youth impacted by the homelessness epidemic. Prof. Howard and I agreed that I would complete the research grant

on youth homelessness and then move on to drafting a project proposal on community college pipeline programs. Despite experiencing homelessness, I had not given any critical thought of the phenomenon since writing my short story during freshman year. As I was researching the topic, I came across the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987—a policy discussed in detail in the following sections—and it completely shifted my perception of homelessness. I was shocked that there was legislation in place that could have supported me while experiencing homelessness in high school. More importantly, I was confused as to why I had no prior knowledge of the single, most pivotal piece of legislation that could have helped me support my students while I was teaching.

Ultimately, the research grant proposal was declined, but that initial assignment made me reflect on my past experiences and drastically changed my research agenda. My current research aims to understand how schools and the greater community can better support the academic and overall wellbeing of students impacted by homelessness. This dissertation is the beginning of my inquiry.

The Educational Debt Owed to Unhoused Youth in Disenfranchised Communities

The number of youth experiencing homelessness in the United States has nearly doubled throughout the past decade from 688,000 students in 2006 to more than 1.5 million students in 2019 (National Center for Homeless Education, 2018). Urban schools have the largest increase and concentration of students experiencing homelessness in the country (NCES, 2017). Yet, despite the large representation of students impacted by homelessness, urban schools are failing to adequately support them. In addition to the many social and emotional challenges that youth experiencing homelessness face, they also endure a host of academic obstacles, which ultimately threaten both their in-school and overall life outcomes (Aviles de Bradley, 2015; Ingram,

Bridgeland, Reed, & Atwell, 2017; Masten et al., 1997; Murphy, 2011). Currently, the national graduation rate for students experiencing homelessness is 64 percent, 20 percentage points lower than the national average—not completing high school dramatically increases a youth's likelihood of experiencing homelessness as an adult (Morton et al., 2018; Murphy & Tobin, 2011).

The disparities in academic outcomes between housed and unhoused students can be attributed to a concept Ladson-Billings (2006) refers to as the "education debt." Unlike the "achievement gap" paradigm, which focuses on marginalized students' underperformance, the education debt refers to the education system's inability to serve historically disenfranchised student groups. Ladson-Billings (2006) describes the education debt as an expense accrued over time (with interest) in which the public schooling system becomes increasingly indebted to the marginalized groups of students that it has and continues to serve poorly. The education debt is comprised of historical, economic, and moral debts owed to these students. Scholars have expanded upon Ladson-Billings's work by highlighting gaps that impact students' ability to achieve academically in school—such as the education policy gap, teacher training gap, school funding gap, the opportunity gap, and the expectation gap that persist at the expense of marginalized students (Irvine, 2010; Milner, 2012).

While Ladson-Billings (2006) conceptualized the educational debt framework with marginalized racial groups (Black, Latino/a, Native American) in mind, the framework aligns well with the disparate gaps of opportunities for youth experiencing homelessness. For example, there are significant gaps in funding services for students experiencing homelessness and providing adequate resources for students experiencing homelessness to thrive in school (Ingram, Bridgeland, Reed, & Atwell, 2017; Masten et al., 1997; Murphy, 2011). In many cases, there is

also an empathy and expectation gap between the adults mandated to support students experiencing homelessness (e.g., teachers, principals, office staff, homeless liaison) and the students themselves (Edwards, 2019; Aviles de Bradley, 2015).

American public schools (and other public institutions) owe much to youth impacted by homelessness due to the education debt. However, it is also critical to acknowledge the additional restitution owed to those marginalized at the intersection of housing instability and race. Black and Latino/a youth have been disproportionately impacted by student homelessness since the 1980s when student homelessness first became a popular political issue (Kozol, 1988; Mawhinney-Rhoads & Stahler, 2006; Tower & White, 1989). Racial discrimination in the housing and employment market, housing displacement due to urban renewal, and the criminalization of Black and Latino/a men, women, and children through the prison, welfare, and foster care systems have made Black and Latino/a families more vulnerable to homelessness. In addition to experiencing homelessness at disparate rates, Black and Latino/a children experiencing homelessness in several cities throughout California have lower academic outcomes and graduation rates than their peers of other races experiencing homelessness. While the debt accumulated against Black and Latino/a youth experiencing homelessness was unacknowledged when the nationwide discourse about student homelessness began (Edwards, 2021), this dissertation centers race and racialized spaces in a broader conversation on how the United States public school system must address the growing number of children it is failing to support.

Experiencing homelessness has lasting impacts on youth and their future opportunities, particularly due to the lack of institutional responses to their academic, social, physical, and emotional needs. For the public education system to start paying its debt to youth impacted by

homelessness, teachers, principals, and educational policymakers must learn how this problem affects impacted students so that effective practices and supports for students experiencing homelessness can be designed and implemented. Such interventions are necessary to improve academic outcomes and high school graduation rates among students impacted by homelessness. Equally—if not more—critical is the overdue and critical alignment of school systems with other public institutions, municipalities, and community-based organizations to provide the robust services needed to serve one of our country's most vulnerable and neglected populations. Like most class issues in the United States, the debt accrued by students experiencing homelessness is intertwined with structural inequities created by racist public policies and the implementation of race-neutral policies that negatively and disproportionally impacted non-White people and non-White communities.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act (MVA) has been the most significant institutional response to the structural barriers of student homelessness in U.S. K-12 public schools. MVA, established in 1987 and recently reauthorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act, is the most comprehensive federal legislation designed to support the academic achievement of students impacted by homelessness. The policy defines student homelessness as any student who lacks a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" (42 USC § 11431). Unlike the common definition of student homelessness provided by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, MVA's definition includes children from families who are temporarily living with relatives or other adults, as well as those living in shelters, motels, or cars (Miller, 2011). The policy mandates that once students are identified as experiencing homelessness,

schools are legally responsible for ensuring that their homeless conditions do not interfere with their ability to access a quality education comparable to their stable-housed peers.

Throughout the past 30 years, the McKinney-Vento Act (MVA) has yielded mixed results. Currently, public K-12 school districts are only required to have one homeless liaison for all of their district schools. As the only person responsible for carrying out the policy mandates at each school site, the homeless liaison is often severely overworked. This is especially likely because liaisons are often required to fulfill several additional roles within their assigned school district (Aviles De Bradley, 2015). Research shows that homeless liaisons typically only have time to focus on administrative mandates and minimal time to provide or arrange support to individual students such as securing tutoring opportunities (which are especially needed for students with interrupted schooling), counseling, and access to extra-curricular activities (Ingram et al., 2017; Piazza & Hyatt, 2019). Furthermore, because the homeless liaison is often the sole expert on youth homelessness employed by any given district, many faculty members are completely unaware of MVA (Aviles De Bradley, 2015; Ingram et al., 2016; Hallet et al., 2015). Faculty's lack of awareness limits their ability to identify and adequately support students experiencing homelessness and leads to a large number of youth being overlooked or unsupported (Hallett & Skrla, 2016; Miller, 2011).

Despite the MVA policy intervention, structural barriers still block thousands of students experiencing homelessness from the opportunity of a quality education. School districts are struggling to identify which students on their school campuses are experiencing homeless, (Hallett & Skrla, 2016; Miller, 2011), provide students experiencing homelessness with a safe schooling environment (Dill, 2015), and eliminate school attendance barriers for these students (Fantuzzo et al., 2013; Fantuzzo et al., 2012; Pappas, 2018). Academic disparities between youth

experiencing homelessness and their stable-housed peers in English Language Arts, mathematics, and science test scores remain wide and persistent (National Center for Homeless Education, 2017). Moreover, the colorblindness of MVA still fails to identify or address the root causes of racial disparities in academic outcomes among the U.S. student homeless population (Aviles de Bradley, 2015a).

While literature has highlighted the structural barriers that impede the academic success of youth impacted by homelessness (Ingram, Bridgeland, Reed, & Atwell, 2017; Masten et al., 1997; Murphy, 2011), research examining school districts that *are* graduating high school students at relatively high rates, despite having experienced homelessness, remains scant (Milner, 2014). Similarly, there is limited research examining youth who are currently or formerly homeless and able to successfully graduate high school and use their agency to navigate various institutions to secure the services they need. Therefore, to focus on the factors that might contribute to the collective success of students experiencing homelessness and explore effective strategies school districts are using to best support them, this study utilized Los Angeles County as an embedded case study to analyze how youth successfully graduate high school and how school districts address student homelessness within an urban space impacted by structural inequities.

Approach to Research Inquiry

To examine youth agency, I utilized an anti-deficit achievement framework (Harper, 2010). An anti-deficit framework focuses on the achievements of a minority group rather than its members' evidenced or presumed underachievement to establish effective, viable solutions to problems (Harper, 2010). Originally used to study undergraduate students of color in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), the framework rests on two significant tenets

(Harper, 2010). The first tenet is that reversing research questions to focus on identifying successes within marginalized groups, rather than relying on questions highlighting their problems, can lead to identifying new solutions that mitigate social issues affecting marginalized communities. For example, much of the literature on youth experiencing homelessness examines reasons why a significant number of these youth do not complete high school (Ingram et al., 2017; Masten et al., 1997; Morton et al., 2018; Murphy, 2011). Anti-deficit questions, however, can provide insight into how youth experiencing homelessness are successfully graduating high school. The anti-deficit achievement framework's second tenet posits that individuals from marginalized groups who have attained success in a domain where most members of their group underachieve are experts with essential experiential knowledge for identifying effective solutions. As such, examining the successes of individuals from marginalized groups provides valuable information for effectively addressing pertinent problems. This study uses an anti-deficit achievement framework to examine the experiences of students who successfully graduated or are on track to graduate high school while experiencing homelessness. Harper (2010) defines academic achievement as a combination of earning a high grade point average, securing a student leadership position, and being awarded merit-based scholarships. This study defines academic success as high school graduation due to its critical role as a gatekeeper for college and future career opportunities.

I have also expanded my use of the anti-deficit achievement framework to inform my inquiry for school districts. My research questions and data collection sites were selected based on my goal to seek out successful outlier districts in Los Angeles County with empirical data that suggests they were experiencing above-average success at graduating students experiencing homelessness.

Research Questions:

My dissertation seeks to examine student agency and institutional responses to student homelessness in urban school districts. In line with an anti-deficit achievement framework, my research questions are:

1. How does Los Angeles County support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?
    A. To what extent, if any, does Los Angeles County Response intervention align with the school district's approaches to support students experiencing homelessness?
2. How do students in Los Angeles County navigate the barriers of homelessness and successfully graduate high school?
    A. To what extent, if any, did high school teachers, counselors, and coaches influence student participants' ability to attain a high school diploma?
    B. To what extent, if any, did community-based organizations and county agencies influence student participants' ability to successfully attain a high school diploma?
3. How do two school districts in Los Angeles County successfully support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?
    A. How do school districts leverage school personnel, district-level personnel, and community resources to serve and respond to the academic and social-emotional needs of students experiencing homelessness so they can ultimately graduate from high school and college career ready?
    B. To what extent (if any) does the racial composition of the homeless student population inform district strategies and interventions?

C. To what extent (if any) do the individual high school teachers and staff provide supplemental supports for students experiencing homelessness beyond the scope and supports of their school district? And, how effective are these supports?

D. To what extent (if any) do the resources in a city and county help or hinder the school district from supporting students experiencing homelessness?

Methods

I employed a case study methodology to address my research questions. Case study methodology attempts to "illuminate a decision or set of decisions, why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result" (Schramm, 1971, p.6). Since the experience of homelessness is inherently transient and requires individuals to navigate various public institutions and move across neighborhoods and cities, utilizing Los Angeles County as a primary unit of analysis was useful. Within Los Angeles County, I interviewed youth impacted by homelessness in high school, city and county government senior administrators, and staff members of non-profit, homeless service agencies to analyze the broader phenomenon of how students navigate homelessness and what local municipalities do to support school districts' efforts in serving students experiencing homelessness. In addition to conducting interviews, I reviewed the homeless strategic plans for Los Angeles County and city homeless strategic plans for 44 cities in the county to examine if and how schools were included in municipality plans for addressing homelessness.

In addition to collecting data across Los Angeles County, I designed two embedded case studies using two school districts that successfully graduated students experiencing homelessness. I employed the embedded cases to interrogate the practices, procedures, and

resources that allow school districts to achieve above-average graduation rates for students experiencing homelessness. Both embedded case studies consisted of two school districts that:

1. Were located in a city in Los Angeles County.
2. Graduated at least 75% of its students experiencing homelessness during the 2017-18 school year.
3. Documented a minimum of 50 high school students experiencing homelessness enrolled in the school district's high school in the 2017-18 school year.

I interviewed current and previous district homeless liaisons, a high school principal, high school teachers, counselors, and partnering non-profit agencies for each embedded case study. To complement my qualitative interviews, I also conducted site observations at both school districts and performed a document analysis examining the assets of every state-approved non-profit organization in the site's respective district. The non-profit organizational analysis was conducted to better assess the number of non-profit organizations within each city that could potentially be utilized as community partners by each respective school district.

In total, the case study consisted of 63 interviews, six school district site observations, and the review of 890 documents.

Main Findings

Youth were able to establish their support networks to help them achieve in school. Their networks often extended across city boundaries and included family, friends, community-based organizations, and county-funded services, but rarely included resources of formal school or school districts. Most of the youth interviewed never heard of the MVA policy and never received the support that it entitled them to receive.

Student homelessness was not included in the county's conceptualization of homelessness as a policy issue. As a result, K-12 educational institutions received less than one percent of the $350 million of the county-voted 1/4 sales tax to specifically address homelessness in L.A. County. Moreover, most cities' strategic plans to address homelessness did not meaningfully include their respective school district(s), resulting in school districts having to establish their own networks of support for students.

The two school districts examined in my study shared common practices that helped them yield positive graduation outcomes for students impacted by homelessness; however, the extent to which homeless liaisons supported students experiencing homelessness depended on their assigned district's ability to garner resources and partnerships within its network. While District A was located in an affluent, wealthy city with an overabundance of resources, District B was located in a working-class, majority Black and Latino/a community that was negatively impacted by racist housing practices and procedures (e.g., redlining, racial covenants, reverse redlining) dating back to the 1950s. Both school districts had staff utilizing their agency on behalf of students; however, they were working in significantly different support networks. District A had access to a family shelter, a university, and an abundance of other well-funded non-profit organizations in their city to partner with in supporting their students experiencing homelessness. In contrast, District B was required to partner with organizations outside their city to obtain resources for their students experiencing homelessness. District B lacked access to stable youth organizations and only recently gained access to an emergency family shelter as a response to the global health pandemic, COVID-19.

Discussion

All three major findings speak to a phenomenon I coined *Impoverished Institutional Network* (IIN). I define an impoverished institutional network as a public institution's inability to provide the necessary financial, social, cultural, and organizational capital to adequately support historically marginalized, vulnerable populations, and becoming overly reliant on punitive practices (i.e., suspensions and expulsions) or punitive public institutions like the criminal justice and foster care system. District B and Los Angeles County in this study illustrate the phenomenon of an IIN. In both cases, individuals (youth and homeless liaisons) exercise their agency within these disjointed and under-resourced institutional ecosystems. While participants of this study have yielded a certain level of academic and life success, their ability to thrive is hampered by the institutional network they must navigate.

Significance of Study

This study provides significant contributions to the education field and introduces three essential areas to our literature on student homelessness. First, this study is the only comprehensive study on student homelessness that utilizes a municipal county as the unit of analysis. Previous studies on student homelessness either focus on the federal level (Miller, 2011a), state level (Bishop et al., 2020), city level (Pavlakis, 2018a), district level (Hallett, Skrla, et al., 2015), or school level (Chow et al., 2015). As a result of setting the unit of analysis at the county level, this study's findings introduce a new stakeholder into the literature on students experiencing homelessness. While county governments cannot supersede city or school board ordinances or policies, they can play a critical role in providing regional supports across cities and school districts. Including county agencies in mitigating the impacts of student homelessness

is a critical step to addressing a transient population who often live and rely on resources across multiple cities and districts.

In addition to introducing a new stakeholder into the literature on students experiencing homelessness, the broader unit of analysis allowed this study to explore the structural interactions between several different institutions. While some studies have explored federal and local homeless and education policy misalignment (Pavlakis & Duffield, 2017), school district interactions with family and community (Pavlakis, 2018a), school district to high school interactions (Hallett, Skrla, et al., 2015), and race (Aviles de Bradley, 2015a), this study is the first to analyze the above interactions in a single context at a county level.

Lastly, this dissertation introduces IIN as a new construct for assessing a school district's ability to respond to student homelessness. The construct requires researchers, school leaders, and policymakers to broaden their conceptualization of which people and entities are included in supporting students experiencing homelessness. It allows institutions to analyze its ability to build networks that enable student and staff agency. While this study illustrates IIN as a construct with the institution's response to student homelessness, the construct can be utilized to analyze other institutional responses to marginalized populations across institutions.

Chapter 2 of this dissertation is a literature review of pertinent research and policy on student homelessness including the various definitions of homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistant Act. Chapter 3 then explains the methodology and theoretical and analytical frameworks guiding this dissertation. Next, Chapter 4 provides a historical context for the findings of this dissertation via an explanation of the legacy of structural racism in Los Angeles County. I present my results as thematic chapters—Chapter 5 focuses on county-level

findings, Chapter 6 focuses on youth findings, and Chapter 7 discusses findings at the district level. I summarize my results and draw implications of my research study in Chapter 8 and conclude with Chapter 9.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW ON STUDENT HOMELESSNESS

In this Chapter, I provide an overview of student homelessness in cities. I start the chapter by detailing the rise of student homelessness in the United States and differentiating between the federal definition of homelessness used by U.S Housing and Urban Development and that of the U.S. Department of Education. I then discuss the psychological and academic effects of homelessness on youth and the unique challenges that students experiencing homelessness may face while living in different precarious living situations. I then highlight the specific subpopulations of students most vulnerable to experiencing homelessness. I conclude this chapter by discussing the role of school in helping support students experiencing homelessness and offer the study's unique contributions to this field of research.

The Rise of Students Impacted by Homelessness

Student homelessness is a major issue in schools throughout the United States. Figure 1 shows that the number of students identified as homeless in U.S. public schools has increased by over 130 percent from 590,000 students in the 2004-05 school year to more than 1.35 million in the 2016-17 school year.

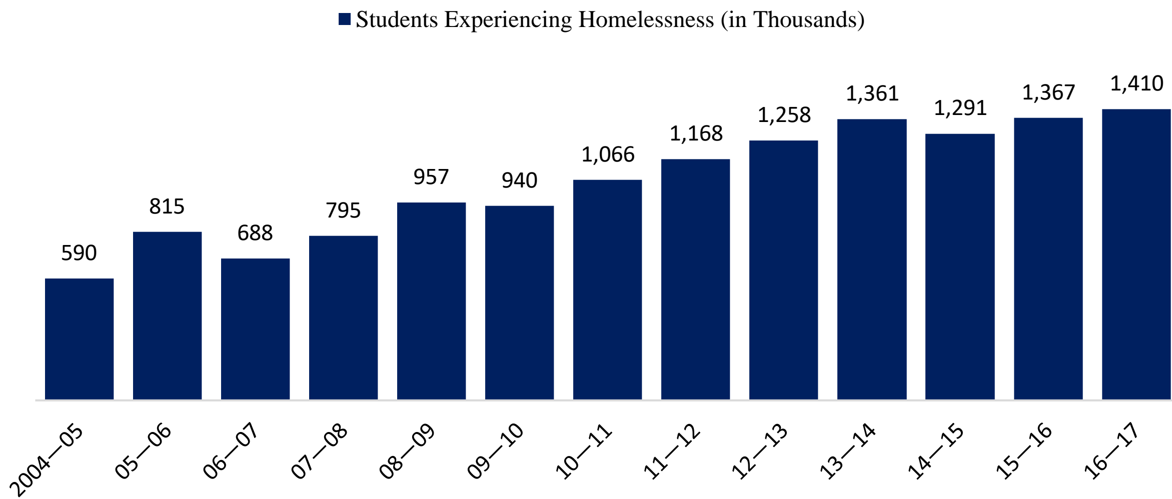


Figure 1. The Number of U.S. Public School Students Experiencing Homelessness, 2004–2017

In New York City Public Schools, the largest school district in the country, one in every 10 students is experiencing homelessness (Schramm, 1971). Similarly, major cities like Los Angeles and Chicago also have some of the largest populations of students experiencing homelessness in the country. Given the high probability of encountering students experiencing homelessness in public schools across the country, it is imperative that school districts understand what it means it be homeless and the different forms it can take. It is also imperative that we understand additional vulnerabilities that non-White and/or LGBT youth experiencing homelessness encounter while unstably housed. However, we must first set a clear definition of the term "homeless."

Defining Homelessness

Housing and Urban Development's Definition of Homelessness

Homelessness is a term often used colloquially to refer to individuals who literally do not have shelter. However, the federal government has operationalized and codified the term "homelessness" via policies and legislation. In 2009, the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act was signed into law, and in 2011 the Act modified the definition of homelessness put forth by the Federal Department of Housing of Urban Development (HUD). As depicted in Table 1, HUD created four broad categories to define homelessness, each of which received different levels of federal support.

	Category Name	Definition	HUD Eligible Assistance
Category 1	Literal Homeless-ness	(1) Individuals or families who lack a fixed regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning: i. Has a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation; ii. Is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotel and motels paid for by charitable organizations or by federal, state, and local government programs); or iii. Is exiting an institution where (s)he has resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution.	• Street Outreach • Emergency Shelter • Rapid Rehousing
Category 2	Imminent Risk of Homeless-ness	(2) Individuals or families who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence, provided that: i. Residence will be lost within 14 days of the date of application for homeless assistance; ii. No subsequent residence has been identified; and iii. The individual family lacks the resources or support network needed to obtain other permanent housing	• Emergency Shelter • Homelessness Prevention

Category 3	Homeless under other Federal Statutes	(3) Unaccompanied youth under 25 years of age, or family with children and youth, who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition, but who: i. Are defined as homeless under the other listed federal statutes; ii. Have not had a lease, ownership interest, or occupancy agreement in permanent housing during the 60 days prior to the homeless assistance application; iii. Have experienced persistent instability as measured by two moves or more during the 60-day period immediately preceding the apply date for homeless assistance; and iv. Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time due to special needs or barriers	• Emergency Shelter • Homeless Prevention
Category 4	Fleeing/ Atempting to Flee Domestic Violence	(4) Individuals or families who: i. Are fleeing or is attempting to flee, domestic violence; ii. Have no other residence; and iii. Lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing	• Street Outreach • Emergency Shelter • Rapid Rehousing • Homeless Prevention

Table 1. Housing and Urban Development Definition of Homelessness and Assistance Eligibility

The HUD definition of homelessness is comprehensive and includes all the federal definitions of homelessness. Under the HUD definition, individuals categorized as experiencing "literal homelessness" (Category 1) and those fleeing domestic violence (Category 4) are provided the most access to resources. Individuals who are "Homeless under other federal statutes" typically do not qualify for subsidies like Rapid Rehousing or Permanent Supportive Housing, and they have a lower chance of receiving a Section 8 Housing Voucher that helps subsidize their housing rent.

State, cities, and municipalities tend to use the Federal Department for Housing and Urban Development's definitions as their criteria for housing subsidies as well. A municipality's ability to align their programming with HUD's definition of homelessness maximizes their funding opportunities to support their local shelters and housing initiatives. Such alignment frequently results in HUD's definition of homelessness overshadowing other federal statutes and becoming the "default definition" of homelessness. By defaulting to HUD's definition of homelessness, however, several other vulnerable populations experiencing homelessness are neglected. For example, students experiencing homelessness fall under the federal statue of MVA, which defines homelessness differently than HUD.

MVA's Definition of Youth Homelessness

Unlike HUD's definition of homelessness, MVA of 1987 is a federal policy that focuses specifically on defining and mitigating youth homelessness. It defines homeless children and youth as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" (42 U.S.C. 11431). More specifically:

- Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (also referred to as "doubled-up")
- Children and youth without regular sleeping accommodations for human beings
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are children who are living in similar circumstances listed above (42 U.S.C. 11431)

The MVA definition of youth homelessness dramatically expands upon HUD's definition as it includes youth who are forced to share housing with others due to economic hardship. The

Housing of Urban Development's Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) categorizes homeless children and adults as either sheltered or unsheltered, but makes no mention of the families forced to double-up. Doubled-up families live with other families due to financial constraints. HUD does not prioritize permanent, supportive housing assistance to doubled-up families. These different definitions are important to understand because they are designed to support different constituents. Housing and Urban Development's definition of homelessness and its policies are specifically geared towards adults and their families. MVA, however, acknowledges that a broad scope of unstable living conditions can affect children's ability to learn and thrive in school, and thus solely focuses on supporting children's access to education. This dissertation uses the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act's definition of homelessness.

The Psychological and Academic Effects of Homelessness on Students

Psychological Impact

Enduring homelessness is often a prolonged traumatic experience that can produce high levels of toxic stress for children and youth, and directly affects their critical wellness. The National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2014) defines toxic stress as severe, frequent, and/or extended activation of the body's sympathetic nervous system. The sympathetic nervous system, commonly known to as the fight-or-flight response, regulates the body's severe stress response. Normally, the sympathetic nervous system produces stress hormones to increase the body's ability to address immediate physical harm, while lowering the brain's cognitive activity. Although this hormonal process is natural, when the sympathetic nervous system continues to produce stress hormones for extended periods of time, it reaches toxic levels that

can have long term effects on a child's body and cognitive development (Kataoka, Langley, Wong, Baweja, & Stein, 2012).

Toxic stress can make it difficult for students experiencing homelessness to concentrate in school. Moreover, students enduring toxic stress may be hypersensitive, irritable, and tired in class (Kataoka et al, 2012). Teachers often misidentify symptoms of toxic stress as disengagement, defiance, or a cognitive disability. While some students experiencing homelessness may have a learning disability, many are misdiagnosed and placed in special education courses (Miller & Schreiber, 2012).

One of the critical buffers against toxic stress for youth is the support of caregivers (Gorzka, 1999; National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2014). However, in the case of unaccompanied youth, parental figures are often absent or have limited contact. Youth experiencing homelessness with their parents may be enduring additional stressors as a result of the indirect stress youth are exposed to by their parents who are also attempting to cope with their own housing crisis. In addition to seeking housing and resources for the family, parents enduring economic stress, such as homelessness, tend to report high rates of feeling depressed and being less able to manage their children's behaviors (Mistry et al., 2008).

While parents experiencing homelessness struggle to support their children's social-emotional needs, what may be interpreted as neglect is often due to the parents' need to prioritize the search for housing and securing the family's basic needs (Pavlakis, 2018b). Literature shows that parents of students experiencing homelessness value education and want their children to be involved in their school and greater community (Miller & Schreiber, 2012; Pavlakis, 2014, 2018b); however, the demands of bringing children to school (multiple schools in some cases), attending mandatory meetings to qualify for federal and local subsidies, working or completing

mandatory service hours, and helping their children with their homework—all while trying to secure housing—compounds the psychological stress parents are already enduring (Pappas, 2018).

In addition to the toxic stress associated with housing instability, youth experiencing homeless are also more likely to have negative psychosocial outcomes as a result of victimization. Analysis of the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows that youth experiencing homelessness are more than four times as likely to report an attempted suicide as their housed counterparts (School House Connections, 2019).

Academic Impact

The National Center on Homelessness (2017) reports that 60% of students experiencing homelessness perform below grade level in state reading (ELA) assessments and 75% perform below grade level in math. National data also shows that these students have lower rates of high school completion (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). Adolescents who leave high school before graduating are introduced to a new host of negative outcomes as adults. For example, adults without high school diplomas have unemployment rates nearly twice that of the average U.S. worker and earn substantially less money over their lifetimes when compared to high school graduates (U.S. Department of Labor, 2017). As a result, when homeless youth fail to complete high school, the likelihood of them experiencing homelessness as adults increases.

Student Mobility

In addition to the psychological toll that homelessness takes on students' ability to focus in school, student mobility also acts as a significant barrier to their academic achievement. Student mobility refers to the frequent need to transfer to different schools, often within a single academic school year (Fantuzzo et al., 2012; Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Pavlakis, 2018b).

Within one school year, 41 percent of K-12 students experiencing homelessness will attend two schools, while 28 percent will attend three or more (Cowen, 2017; Moore, 2005). Unlike planned moves, which may result from a new job or a decision to relocate to a new neighborhood, families experiencing homelessness are often forced to move unexpectedly with very little time for planning. And in many cases, families and youth experiencing homelessness are moving from a permanent location to a temporary one, such as a homeless shelter, motel, a relative's house, a car, or in some cases, they may be forced onto the streets (Samuels et al., 2018). Transience and instability in housing can cause high levels of uncertainty and anxiety for students and their families. In addition, students are also forced to acclimate to a new school. Adjusting to a new school culture, acclimating to new teacher expectations, creating new friendships, all while attempting to catch up on previously taught course material, can be extremely stressful and difficult.

Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism is a particularly significant challenge for students experiencing homelessness. Many school districts define chronic absenteeism as missing more than 10 percent (around 18 school days) of an academic year. Chronic absenteeism dramatically affects the academic achievement of students in all grade levels (Smerillo et al., 2018). In an attempt to maintain stability, students experiencing homelessness may travel far in order to continue attending their school of origin. The long commutes can often cause them to be tardy to school. For schools with static class schedules, a student experiencing homelessness may miss 10 percent of their first period class due to tardiness. Additionally, families attempting to receive housing services are often required to bring their children with them to the meetings. Since these

local and federal government offices typically close at 5 P.M., students are forced to either arrive late, leave school, or miss school entirely (Pappas, 2018).

Exploring Adolescent Homelessness in Different Contexts

While there are common risks that any youth experiencing homelessness may encounter, different precarious living arrangements come with unique challenges. In this section, I will discuss the five living contexts outlined by the U.S. Department of Education's Education for Homeless Children and Youth program. Table 2 provides a description of the five categorical living contexts used to describe the housing arrangements that youth experiencing homelessness may encounter and the prevalence of the living context for students in the 2016-17 school year. This section is not meant to be an exhaustive list of challenges, but is rather an illustration of the complexities that youth experiencing homelessness may encounter in different living contexts.

Living Context	**Description**	**Percentage of Homeless Population (2016-17 SY)**
Doubled-up	When a family (or student) is forced to temporarily live with another family due to loss of permanent housing.	76%
Living in a Shelter or Transitional Housing	When a family (or student) is living in a transitional housing program due to loss of permanent housing.	14%
Sleeping in Motels/Hotels	When a family (or student) is living in a motel for interim housing due to loss of permanent housing.	7%
Living on the Streets	When a family (or student) has no consistent shelter and sleeps in public spaces.	3%

Living in a Car or RV	When a family (or student) has no consistent shelter and sleeps in their car or RV.	

Table 2. Common Living Context for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Doubled-Up Living

The most common living situation for students experiencing homelessness is temporarily sharing the housing of people as a result of financial hardships—a living arrangement called double-up. While youth and families doubling up are able to avoid the stigma of living on the streets, in car, or in a homeless shelter, they are still a very vulnerable population relative to their stably housed peers (Hallet, 2012; Pavlakis, 2014; Low et al., 2016). Youth who are doubled-up tend to have the least amount of access to resources because most resources for people experiencing homelessness use HUD's narrow definition of homelessness. Additionally, families doubled-up tend to be geographically farther from organizations and professionals that are actively targeting and supporting people experiencing homelessness (Pavlakis, 2014). For example, many homeless shelters and youth drop-in centers have case managers, psychologists, and work development programs housed within their facilities to provide services to the help stabilize families and youth. Youth doubling-up have to seek each of these resources out on their own with limited support.

While some may assume that academic outcomes for youth who are doubled-up are comparable to those of low-income students, their academic performance and psychosocial outcomes are actually more comparable to that of other unhoused youth. Doubled-up youth's grade point average and graduation rates are significantly lower than their low-income housed peers, and their absenteeism and suspension rates are significantly higher (Low et al., 2016). Doubled-up youth also experience significant negative, psychosocial outcomes. Analysis of the

Center for Disease Control and Prevention's National Youth Risk Behavior Survey shows that doubled-up youth are nearly three times as likely to report having been raped than their stably housed peers and four times more likely to report an attempted suicide (Schoolhouse Connections, 2019).

The impact that doubling-up has on students can also vary according to household dynamics and living arrangements with the host family. For example, Hallet (2012) conducted an ethnography of adolescents who were doubling up with their families in Los Angeles, California. Hallet (2012) identified two living arrangements between families experiencing homelessness and their host. The first arrangement Hallet (2012) referred to as merged residences. Merged residences combines the family experiencing homeless into the hierarchal structure of the host family. In such living arrangements, the host-parent becomes the head of the household and the parental autonomy of parents who are experiencing housing instability can be diminished. The second type of doubled-up living arrange is separated households. In separated households, both the host family and family being hosted split the financial costs of rent and food, however, each family retains its autonomy. Hallet (2012) posits that merged residences arrangement influences a higher level of youth participation in school compared to the separate household arrangement. Merged household's collaborative living decreased the levels of stress families experienced while homeless and allowed for both the host and hosted to leverage each other for childcare and household responsibilities.

Living on the Streets

The most literal form on homelessness refers to living on the street, in vehicles, and in public spaces. Children and youth living on the streets and vehicles represent three percent of the students identified as experiencing homelessness within K-12 public schools. The youth living

on the streets tend to experience higher levels of criminalization and are less likely to participate in school. California Research Bureau conducted a survey with 208 unaccompanied youth who were living separately from their legal guardians and were either currently experiencing or had previously experienced homelessness (Bernstein & Foster, 2008). The study found that 28% of the youth experiencing homelessness were forced to leave their family's home. Fifty percent of the youth interviewed stated that they felt unsafe living on the streets and cited crime and police harassment as key factors making them feel unsafe. Seventy-five percent of the youth interviewed stated regular negative interactions with the police (Bernstein & Foster, 2008).

The criminalization of homelessness is a unique experience for youth living on the streets. In many cities across the county, living on the streets is considered a crime. A coalition of scholars at Berkeley Law Policy Advocacy Clinic analyzed local laws in 58 cities throughout California and found 500 laws that target activities associated with homelessness (Fisher & Miller et al, 2014). The scholars divided the 500 laws into four categories: 1) food sharing, 2) begging and panhandling, 3) sleeping, camping, and lodging, and 4) standing, sitting, and resting.

Figure 2 highlights the number of cities that have laws that fall into the aforementioned categories. In each of the 58 cities researched, people experiencing homelessness or people who

are perceived as being homeless by local authorities can be cited and arrested (Fisher & Miller etal, 2014). For example, all of the cities researched had laws against sitting or resting in public spaces. The criminalization of public spaces for students experiencing homelessness increases the chances of youth being arrested, which in turn lowers their likelihood of graduating high

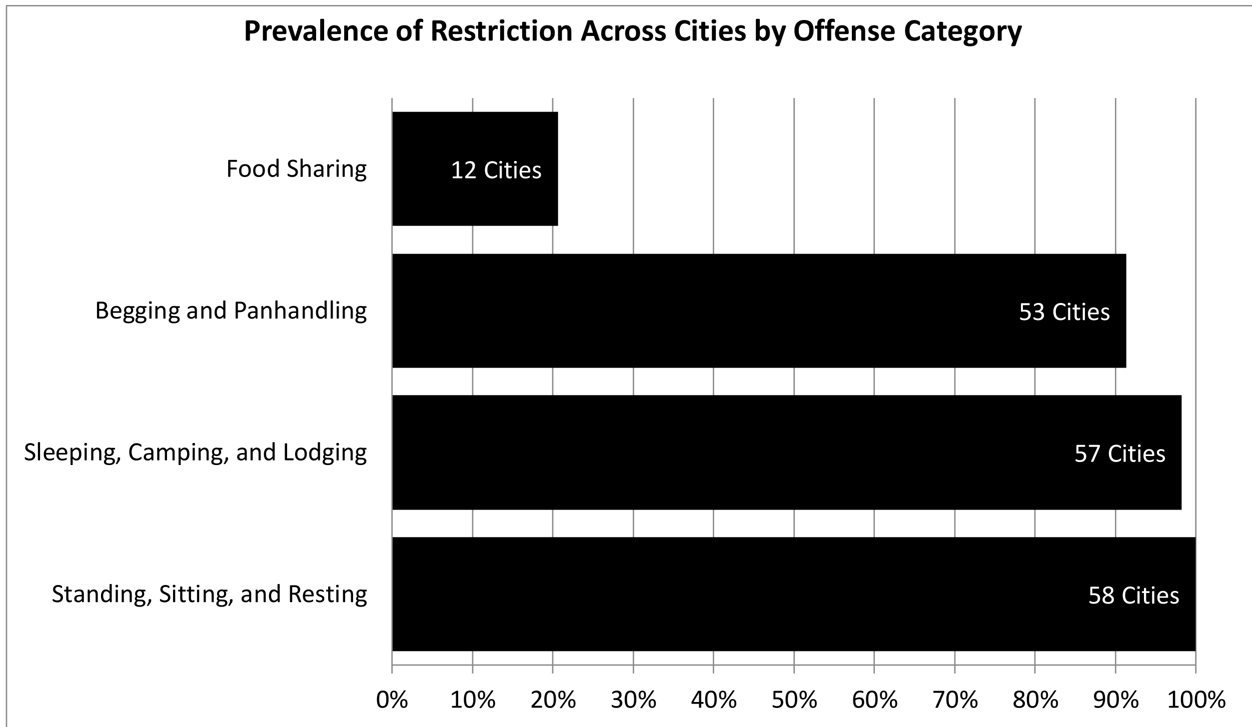


Figure 2. Prevalence of Restriction Across Cities by Offense Category

school (Hirschfield, 2009). While non-White youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to be harassed and arrested across different precarious living conditions, racial differences in police contact dissipate the longer a White youth lives on the streets (Ivanich & Warner, 2019).

In addition to their increased surveillance as a result of living on the streets, students experiencing homelessness are also more likely to be suspended at school (Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, 2016). School suspensions alone increase a student's likelihood of being funneled into the criminal justice system—a process American Civil Liberties Union coined "the school to prison pipeline" (ACLU, 2008). The criminalization of youth living on the

streets in both public spaces and in schools compounds their risks of being arrested, while concurrently lowering their chances of completing high school.

Living in Family Shelters

Similar to families living in doubled-up or separated residence arrangements (Hallett, 2012), families living in family shelters are often forced to adjust their routines and relinquish some of their parental authority as well. Such a lack of environmental control causes parents and their children to endure high levels of toxic stress. In an effort to understand how family routines are affected by living in shelters, Mayberry, Shinn, Benton, and Wise (2014) analyzed interviews from 80 parents living in family shelters in four different states. Results showed that shelter rules, which dictate when families can eat, sleep, and how they should discipline their children, can disrupt parents' established routines. Many parents feel their parenting styles are watched closely and if they do not follow the shelter's rules, they will be removed from the shelter or lose their children to foster care. The imposed regulations by the shelter administrators can erode parental control and increase the toxic stress levels of both parents and their children.

In addition to superimposing regulations on parents, living in a homeless shelter can also increases youth's likelihood of missing school. The Independent Budget Office of New York City (IBO) analyzed absenteeism rates for students enrolled in New York City Public School District who were doubled-up, living in shelters, and living in stable housing (Pappas, 2016). The report found that 34 percent of students who were doubled-up missed a minimum of 20 percent of the school year due to absenteeism and 12 percent of students missed more that 80 percent of the school year. The results were more troubling for those living in shelters. Sixy-six percent of the youth living in homeless shelters missed a minimum of 20% of their school year—and 34% of youth living in shelters missed more that 80% of the school year. Pappas (2016) posits that

shelters typically displace students from their school community thereby causing students to travel longer distances to get to school. Additionally, homeless shelters require parents to attend meetings with their children during school hours. The mandated meetings force parents to pull their kids out of school to ensure they maintain housing. Chronic absenteeism is associated with low academic performance in school (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012).

Most Vulnerable Student Populations

Youth homelessness is a devastating epidemic with negative outcomes for students across all demographics. Some student populations, however, have a higher risk of becoming homeless such as Black students, Latino/a students, and LGBT students. The following section briefly describes the overrepresentation of the aforementioned subgroups in the homeless population.

Black Students

Structural racism is rarely cited as a cause of homelessness among Black youth in the United States. Structural racism refers to the ways that race and class have historically been implicated in the structure of the American political economy (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). Unlike interpersonal racism, structural racism is not premised upon the actions, motivations or beliefs of individuals. Although individual racists may play a role in perpetuating racism and racial disparities, the operation of the market (particularly financial and housing markets), the political system, and institutions such as banks, schools, the criminal justice system, and the healthcare system, all work to reinforce the marginalization of certain racial minorities.

Since 1980, Black people have represented approximately 40% of the national homeless population while only comprising 12.5% of the general U.S. population (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2019; Baxter & Hopper, 1981). Today, Black youth are 83% more likely to experience homelessness than youth of other races (Morton et al., 2018). While some education

researchers have started to examine the racial disparity within the student homeless population (Aviles, 2017; Aviles de Bradley, 2015; Edwards & Noguera, 2022; Milner, 2014.), we still have a large knowledge gap (Carrasco, 2019). In order to equitably and effectively teach students experiencing homelessness, exploring racial inequities in the homeless youth population is imperative. Black students experiencing homelessness have higher suspension rates, higher absenteeism rates, and lower graduation rates than their White and Latino/a peers who are also experiencing homelessness.

Latino/a Students

Latino/a students are significantly impacted by homelessness, especially in states with large Latino/a populations. In Texas, Latino/a students comprise 52% of the general population and in the 2017-18 school year, they made up 48% of the student homeless population. Similar trends are found in New York, Florida, and California. Further, despite their large numbers, Latino/a students are the most likely to be undercounted due to their families' fear of government authorities and language barriers (Chinchilla, 2019; Conroy & Heer, 2003). Enrolling in shelters or speaking with school officials about housing issues becomes especially dangerous for recently documented and undocumented immigrants who fear deportation.

As a result, Latino/a students who are identified under MVA are more likely to be doubled-up or sleeping in vehicles, both living arrangements that make it difficult to gain access to resources under HUD-related programs.

LGBT Students

Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth represent another demographic of students disproportionately affected by homelessness. LGBT youth comprise 30% to 40% of clients served by homeless youth agencies, dropout centers, outreach, and housing programs

(Durso & Gates, 2012); they are twice as likely to experience homelessness as heterosexual youth (Samuels et al., 2018). LGBT students tend to have higher rates of homelessness than their non-LGBT peers as a result of either running away from their home or being forced out by their families due to discrimination against their sexual orientation (Durso & Gates, 2012; Milburn et al., 2006). LGBT youth who experience homelessness have higher risks of mental health issues, substance abuse rates, and suicidal thoughts as compared to heterosexual adolescents who experience homelessness.

While some aspects of the homeless experience cut across race, gender, sexual orientation, and living arrangements, it is a not a monolithic journey. While this dissertation did not exclusively study one particular cross section of this population, my analysis and findings do contextualize participants' salient identities and living conditions.

The Role of Schools in Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness

Educational Policy Supporting Homeless Youth at the District

MVA is the federal government's most significant piece of legislation addressing youth homelessness. The policy mandates that once students are identified as homeless, schools are legally responsible for ensuring that their homeless conditions do not interfere with their ability to access a quality education, comparable to their stable-housed peers. States are provided grant money that is funneled to schools to actualize MVA in the following ways:

- *Access to School:* Homeless students have the right and discretion to either stay at their current school or immediately enroll in the public school closest to their relocation. If students live far away from their current school, the district is required to provide transportation. Furthermore, unstable housing should not prohibit students' participation in afterschool programs and enrichment activities.

- *Access to Food:* All homeless students are immediately enrolled in free breakfast and lunch programs at school.
- *Academic Support*: All homeless students are eligible for academic tutoring and enrichment programs provided by the school to ensure they are able to access the mainstream curricula.
- *Support with FASA and College Advisement*: Support students, especially unaccompanied minors with FASA application.

MVA has yielded promising results. For the first time in United States history, states have been held accountable for supporting homeless youth and required to acknowledge homelessness as a legitimate barrier to educational attainment (Miller, 2011b). The policy elevated school attendance rates for homeless youth by an estimated 17% and has lowered student residency issues for identified homeless youth (Markward & Biros, 2001). While MVA has established many support systems for homeless students, the policy has yet to reach a large percentage of homeless students because many youth, families, and school staff are still unaware of the policy (Hallett, Skrla, & Low, 2015).

One significant challenge to the implementation of MVA is its broad definition of homeless youth. While the policy's widely inclusive definition ensures that a wide range of children living in unstable conditions are supported, it also makes it challenging for schools and other local educational agencies to identify homeless youth. "Homeless" is a stigmatizing label and many students and parents do not want to be associated with the term (Aviles De Bradley, 2015; Ingram et al, 2016). The reluctance to be labeled homeless often keeps families from utilizing available resources and makes it difficult for school personnel and the school homeless liaison to support them. Identifying homeless youth becomes even more complex when we start including

doubled-up families, because these students and families often do not know that they qualify for supports and services under MVA (Ingram et al, 2016).

Another issue with implementing MVA is a lack of capacity and awareness among school personnel. Currently, MVA mandates each school district (or Local Education Agency) to have one homeless liaison. The homeless liaison is responsible for identifying homeless students, ensuring their enrollment, tracking student attendance, and providing homeless students with opportunities for academic enrichment. Because the homeless liaison is often the only personnel responsible for carrying out the mandates of the policy at the school site, many faculty members are completely unaware of MVA (Aviles De Bradley, 2015; Ingram et al, 2016; Hallet et al, 2015; Hickler & Auerswald, 2009). In her book *From Charity to Equity*, Ann M. Aviles de Bradley (2015) analyzed the implementation of MVA in two Chicago public schools with high homeless youth populations. Her findings highlighted that homeless liaisons were overworked and often times served several additional roles in the school including teaching, counseling, and serving as test coordinators. According to Aviles, many homeless liaisons only had time to focus on administrative mandates and little time to provide students with tutoring opportunities, counseling, and resources for community programming (Ingram et al, 2016). Hallet (2015) conducted a qualitative study analyzing the implementation of MVA in Northern California. His analyses asserts that school districts must improve their administrative procedures for identifying youth experiencing homelessness, train principals and staff members on the how to support youth experiencing homelessness, and integrate serving homeless youth into the school mission.

The Role of School Sites in Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness

While the accountability of MVA stops at the district level, the school site is the most critical level for supporting the daily needs of students experiencing homelessness. Schools can

provide students experiencing homelessness with a safe haven and stable environment to mitigate the lack of stabilizing routines they are receive at home (Mayberry et al., 2014). Providing a consistent and caring environment is the foundation for building students' self-esteem and promoting a sense of belonging, which can lead to higher attendance rates and more academic effort (Aviles de Bradley, 2015a). School leaders that are able to successfully support students experiencing homelessness are those that can (1) establish effective channels of communication between their school site, district, and community partners; (2) streamline processes for families experiencing homelessness to be identified and supported, and (3) make sure their stakeholders (teachers, staff, students, and parents) are aware of the resources allocated for students experiencing homelessness (Miller, 2009).

Unfortunately establishing these collaborative partnerships is still a rarity (Pavlakis, 2018b). The management of limited funds and time, coupled with high staff turnover, and poor communication amongst stakeholders impede schools' ability to successfully collaborate at multiple levels (Hallett, Low, et al., 2015; Pavlakis, 2018b).

Teachers' Role

Teachers can play a critical role in supporting the academic and overall wellbeing of youth experiencing homelessness. Teachers have the most effective access to identifying students experiencing homelessness (Ingram et al., 2017). Teachers are typically the only staff person that has consistent daily interactions with the students that they instruct (Brubacher, Powell, Snow, Skouteris, & Manger, 2016; Sedlak et al., 2010). While teachers could be an asset, they are underutilized in these efforts and can potentially pose barriers for student experiencing homelessness.

Despite the critical role that teachers play in the lives of students experiencing homelessness, they are not adequately trained to serve as strong sources of support for those students. Teachers' lack of preparation coupled with general negative stereotypes generally held about the poor and homeless, negatively impact how teachers interact with and support students experiencing homelessness (Chow et al., 2015; Delpit, 2006). Furthermore, when students experiencing homelessness are enrolling into their class in the middle of the academic year or frequently missing days of school, it adds additional work for teachers and makes some teachers view homeless youth as a more challenging population to instruct than their stably housed counterparts (Poland, 2010). Although the teachers may not verbally express their frustration, their perception implicitly impacts their interactions with homeless youth (Poland, 2010). Beth Powers-Costello and Kevin Swick (2011) posit that teachers should participate in trainings that allow them to reflect on their perceptions of homeless children and how their thoughts may influence their teaching practices.

Parental Involvement

A school system's ability to enable parental involvement is a critical component in supporting the overall academic achievement of students (Miller & Schreiber, 2012). Parental support becomes especially crucial for students experiencing homelessness (Chow et al., 2015; Miller, 2009; J. F. Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Pavlakis, 2018b). Earlier sections discussed the overwhelming workload of parents experiencing homelessness. In addition to their workloads, parents experiencing homelessness must also overcome the negative perceptions that some school adults hold against them. For example, Miller & Schreiber (2012) found that 79% of parents helped their children with their homework at least a few times a week; however, exant literature documents that teachers and school staff label parents experiencing homelessness as

"lazy," "dysfunctional," and "bad parents" (Chow et al., 2015; Miller & Schreiber, 2012). This negative perception often creates distrust and prevents forming and sustaining collaborative relationships between schools and parents (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Miller, 2009). Parents experiencing homelessness with their children usually want more guidance to help support their children, but they are often unaware of their child's rights under MVA (Hallett, Low, et al., 2015; Piazza & Hyatt, 2019). School systems often rely on the district homeless liason to broker relationships with parents experiencing homelessness, however, the district homeless liason's distance from the day-to-day school experience leaves a significant gap in support (Piazza & Hyatt, 2019).

Partnering with Community Organizations

Researchers and practioners agree that having strong interagency community involvement in serving students and families is critical to supporting students' academic success (Grothaus et al., 2011; Miller, 2009). Miller (2009) asserts:

> That is, few urban schools, shelters, or community agencies are individually equipped to comprehensively address the widely varying academic, social, emotional, and psychological needs of children and families who are homeless, so they must work with partners who possess complementary resources and capacities (223).

Miller's (2009) phenomeological study interviewed shelter-based administrators, case managers, and child development specialists located a large urban school district. The study found that family shelters were unfamilar with MVA and how their school and school districts operated organizationally. Most staff in Miller's (2009) sample did not know MVA policies and did not

have connections with critical school personnel to answer questions—their lack of awareness limited their ability to effectively partner with schools.

Miller's (2009) findings aligned with previous scholarship. Ashuesher (2006) interviewed shelter and school staff and found the two systems lacked awareness of each other's roles and responsibilies which contributed to a contentious relationship between the two systems. For example, shelter staff members felt that school personnel were intentionally excluding students experiencing homelessness from equitable opportunities, while teachers accused shelter staff members of "going through the motions" and inadequately supporting the social and emotional needs of students. In both studies, scholars called for clearer communication and distributive leadership between both agencies; however, there is no evidence that their recommendations have become a norm throughout U.S. urban school districts.

While scholarship on schools establishing community partnerships to support students experiencing homelessness is limited, the few manuscripts published on the topic only focus on the collaboration between school districts and family shelters (Grothaus et al., 2011; Miller, 2009). The limited literature on community-based organizations prevents the field from understanding how schools are partnering with other non-profit organizations to support the various social, emotional, and physiological needs of students experiencing homelessness.

Conclusion

As evident in the literature, supporting the success of students experiencing homelessness is a complicated task that requires public policy coupled with a network of stakeholders that include district homeless liasons, school staff, teachers, parents, and community based organizations. While there are studies that capture the relationship between students experiencing homeless and one or two of the aforemented stakeholder groups, qualitative research has yet to

thoroughly explore how school districts are supporting the graduation rates of students experiencing homelessness inclusive of all five stakeholders within a school district. Moreover, only a few studies have offered a critical examination of the role race and structural racism play in the academic, social, and geographical context of students experiencing homelessness. This case study examines the interactions of the previously mentioned stakeholders and the role they play in helping students and school district not only execute the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Act, but also leverage broader responses to serve students experiencing homelessness.

While this chapter briefly discussed racial disparities within student homeless populations, the following chapter expounds on the role structural racism plays in creating disparate outcomes for individuals along racial lines. Chapter 4 will define structural racism and use it as and analytical frame to contextualize Los Angeles County as a region and racialized spaces where student homelessness is more prone to occur.

CHAPTER 3:

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

My dissertation examines student agency and institutional responses to student homelessness utilizing an anti-deficit achievement framework. An anti-deficit framework focuses on the achievements of a minority group rather than their underachievement to establish effective, viable solutions to problems (Harper, 2010). Originally used to study undergraduate students of color in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM), the framework rests on two critical tenets (Harper, 2010). The first tenet of the anti-deficit achievement framework is that reversing research questions to focus on identifying successes within marginalized groups, rather than relying on questions highlighting their problems, can lead to new solutions that mitigate social issues affecting marginalized communities. For example, much of the literature on youth experiencing homelessness examines reasons why many youth do not complete high school (Ingram et al., 2017; Masten et al., 1997; Murphy & Tobin, 2011). Anti-deficit questions, however, can provide insight into how youth experiencing homelessness are successfully graduating high school.

The second tenet of the anti-deficit achievement framework posits that individuals from marginalized groups who have attained success in a domain where most underachieve are experts with essential experiential knowledge for identifying effective solutions. This study uses an anti-deficit achievement framework to examine the experiences of students who, at the time of the study, successfully graduated or were on track to graduate high school while experiencing homelessness. Moreover, this study applied the framework to select an analytic sample of school districts from Los Angeles County. Instead of examining school districts where students

experiencing homelessness graduate at rates below the county average, I selected districts where they have demonstrated academic achievement via higher than average graduation rates.

Harper (2010) defines academic achievement as a combination of a high-grade point average, student leadership position, and merit-based scholarships. Due to its critical role as a gatekeeper for college and future career opportunities, this study defines academic achievement as graduating high school or a high scchool with a graduation rates above the country average. In line with an anti-deficit achievement framework, my research questions are:

4. How does Los Angeles County support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?
    A. To what extent, if any, does Los Angeles County Response intervention align with the school district's approaches to support students experiencing homelessness?
5. How do students in Los Angeles County navigate the barriers of homelessness and successfully graduate high school?
    A. To what extent, if any, did high school teachers, counselors, and coaches influence student participants' ability to attain a high school diploma?
    B. To what extent, if any, did community-based organizations and county agencies influence student participants' ability to successfully attain a high school diploma?
6. How do two school districts in Los Angeles County successfully support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?
    A. How do school districts leverage school personnel, district-level personnel, and community resources to serve and respond to the academic and social-emotional

needs of students experiencing homelessness so they can ultimately graduate from high school and college career-ready?

B. To what extent (if any) does the racial composition of the homeless student population inform district strategies and interventions?
C. To what extent (if any) do the individual high school teachers and staff provide supplemental supports for students experiencing homelessness beyond the scope and supports of their school district? And, how effective are these supports?
D. To what extent (if any), do the resources in a city and county help or hinder the district from supporting students experiencing homelessness?

To respond to the above-listed research questions, I used an embedded case study design to analyze Los Angeles's top-down intervention structures to support students experiencing homelessness. This study draws upon multi-tiered system of support, community cultural wealth, and network impoverishment as theoretical and analytical frameworks to implement the multiple case study design. The following section discusses case study methodology as an introduction to an embedded case study design. I then explain how this dissertation uses multiple case study design to evaluate the degree to which the county and selected school districts are supporting students experiencing homelessness. Next, I present multi-tiered system of support, community cultural wealth, and network impoverishment and discuss how each framework informs the research design. Last, I share my data collection and analytical approach.

Case Study Methodology

Case study methodology is a discipline of inquiry that enables researchers to explore how processes within a phenomenon function. Yin (2018) defines case study methodology as, "An empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-

world context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident" (pp. 15). Unlike experimental designs that try to isolate or control for environmental factors, case study methodology views the context surrounding the phenomenon as important knowledge for deeply understanding the mechanisms of the case being analyzed. A rigorous case study design allows researchers to explore phenomena in a real-world setting while expanding and generalizing theories on said phenomena (Yin, 2018). This dissertation uses case study design to identify systems and resources that Los Angeles County provides to effectively support students experiencing homelessness, while simultaneously examining the degree to which County- and school district-level supports align with the self-reported needs of students experiencing homelessness.

To ensure a rigorous and focused research design, case study methodology requires five key components (Yin, 2018):

1. Takes the form of "how" or "why" questions that are explanatory and require the exploration of a process.
2. Uses propositions or targeted secondary questions to narrow the scope of the identified phenomenon being studied.
3. Has a clear case that is a concrete manifestation of the phenomenon and is bounded (by time, geography, and/or another significant characteristic) to distinguish what is considered part of the case and what will be considered context.
4. Must have a logical link between the research's (1) question, (2) propositions, and (3) collected data.

5. Must have a clear criterion for analyzing data within the case(s) and interpreting findings.

Table 3 provides a synopsis of how this dissertation complies with the five components for a rigorous case study design. The five components will also be discussed throughout the rest of this chapter.

	Case Study Components	Current Study	Alignment
1.	A case study inquiry takes the form of a "how" or "why" question that is explanatory and requires the exploration of a process.	The current study's overarching research inquiry examines the processes by which the county (and selected school districts) support students experiencing homelessness. "How do Los Angeles County and individual school districts successfully support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?"	Yes
2.	A case study design often uses propositions or targeted secondary questions to narrow the scope of the identified phenomenon being studied.	This study analyzes the phenomenon of a county resource being leveraged to support students experiencing homelessness. This study has three (3) primary research questions and seven (7) secondary research questions to narrow the study's analysis of the phenomenon.	Yes
3.	A case study design has a clear case that is a concrete manifestation of the phenomenon and is bounded (by time, geography, and/or another significant characteristic) to distinguish what is considered part of the case and what will be considered context.	The cases in this study are bound by geography, time, and institutional purpose. • Located in Los Angeles County • School districts graduate at least 75% of their students experiencing homelessness in the 2017-18 school year. • Has a minimum of 50 high school students experiencing homelessness enrolled in the school district high school in the 2017-18 school year • Is currently addressing student homelessness via a district-down approach In addition to listed criteria, the data collected for analysis was published between 2015-21.	Yes

4.	A case study design must have a logical link between the research's (1) questions, (2) propositions, and (3) collected data.	This study collected the following data: • Interviews with city and county government officials • Interviews from district homeless liaisons, school level staff, teachers, students impacted by homelessness • Artifacts that highlight resources, procedures, and policies that support or impact students experiencing homelessness All data collected answer my overall research inquiry on how institutions respond to student homelessness in city school districts.	Yes
5.	A case study design must have a clear criterion for analyzing data within the case(s) and interpreting findings.	The data analysis process was divided into four (4) stages to address each research question. Within each stage, I used an inductive bottom-up approach that deploys five (5) cycles of coding and analysis to identify common themes to answer my three research questions.	Yes

Table 3. Summary of Study's Alignment with a Rigorous Case Study Design

Single Embedded Case Study Design

There are several ways to design cases via case study methodology. Figure 3 illustrates four of the most common case study designs. Each design has a different number of cases and units of analyses. For example, Type 1 is a single case study with only one unit of analysis. Single case study designs are ideal for examining either very *rare cases* thereby resulting in novel findings, or very *common case*—thus providing largely generalizable results.

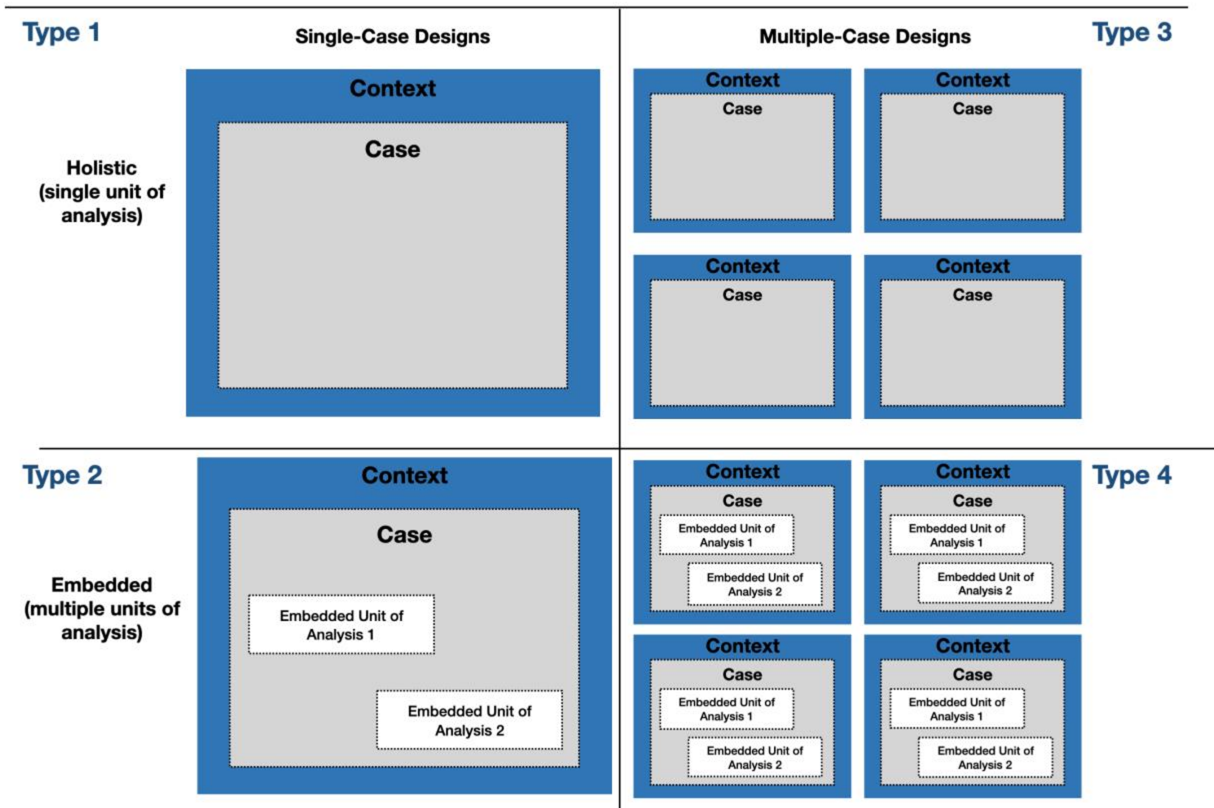


Figure 3. Basic Types of Designs for Case Studies

This dissertation uses a single embedded case study design. A single embedded case study design (Type 2) analyzes one case using two or more units of analysis. Single-embedded case study is an ideal design for understanding multilayered processes because it allows researchers to theorize how components within a case interact with one another to influence the phenomenon being studied. This study sought to analyze how county and select district level interventions are helping students experiencing homelessness graduate high school. However, it is essential to understand how the county's strategic implementation interacts with its key stakeholders (the school district liaisons, teachers, students, and community organizations) to achieve this goal. As illustrated in Figure 4, this dissertation uses Los Angeles County as the

context of this study and Los Angeles County's Homeless Response System as the primary case and unit of analysis.

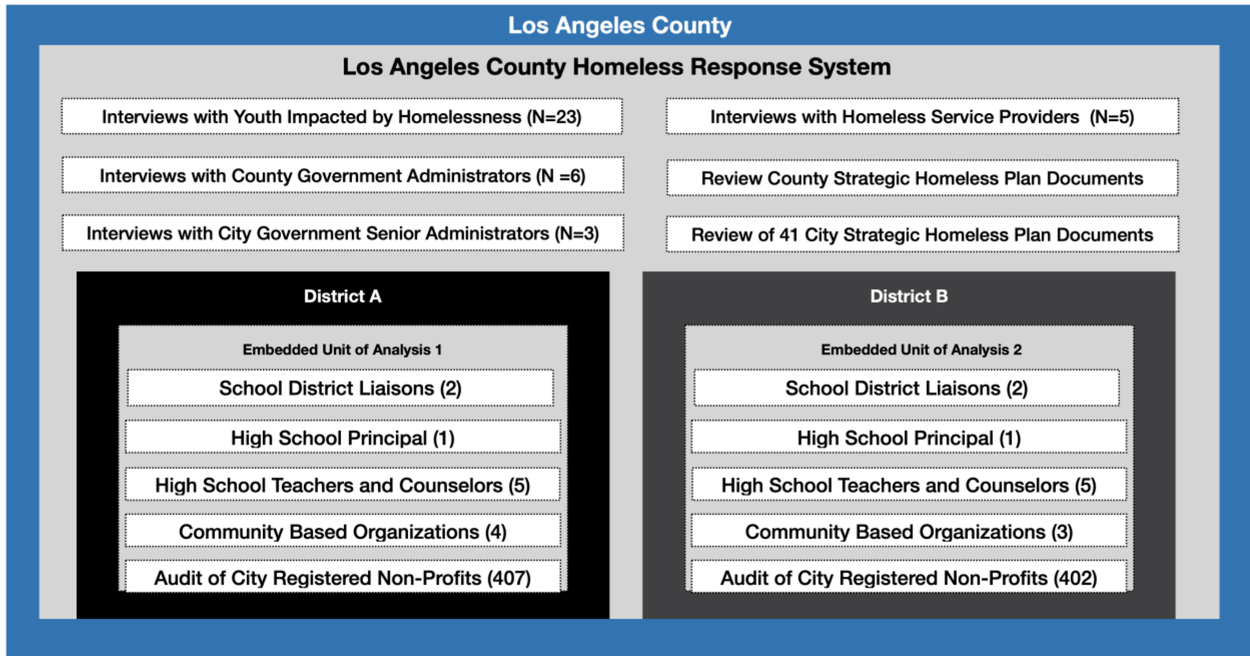


Figure 4. Dissertation Case Study Design

Data Collection and Analytical Process

While all the data collected for this study is connected, different segments of the data corpus were utilized to answer different research questions. Further, each research question pulled from different theoretical frameworks. Table 4 highlights which data were used to answer each question, and which conceptual and analytical frameworks were used to contextualize findings. For example, to respond to my first research question, I interviewed youth impacted by homelessness throughout the County to understand how they navigated homelessness while in high school. To understand my findings for RQ1, I used community cultural wealth as an analytical tool. In the following section, I detail how I collected my data for this case study

question and the frameworks that I used to inform my analysis. I cluster my recruitment process, data collection, frameworks, and analytical process by my research inquiry.

Research Questions	**Primary Data Source**	**Primary Framework(s)**
RQ1: How do students in Los Angeles County navigate the barriers of homelessness to successfully graduate high school?	1. Interviews with youth impacted by homelessness in high school	1. Community Cultural Wealth
RQ2: How does Los Angeles County support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?	1. Interviews with County government administrators 2. Interviews with City government officials 3. Interviews with homeless service providers 4. Interviews with school district homeless liaisons 5. Interviews with County government administrators 6. Review of County homeless plan documents 7. Review of City homeless plan documents	1. Multi-tiered System of Support
RQ3: How do two school districts in Los Angeles County successfully support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?	1. Interviews with school district homeless liaisons 2. Interviews with high school principals 3. Interviews with high school teachers and counselors 4. Interviews with community-based organizations 5. Interviews with school district homeless liaisons 6. Audit of City registered non-profits	1. Multi-Tiered System of Support
RQ1, RQ2, and RQ3	1. All data collected.	1. Community Cultural Wealth 2. Multi-Tiered System of Support 3. Network Impoverishment

Table 4. Research Question, Data Sources, Framework Alignment

RQ1: How do students in Los Angeles County navigate the barriers of homelessness to successfully graduate high school?

To answer this first, overarching research question, I recruited youth who met the following criteria:

1. Were 14 to 24 years old during the time of the interview
2. Experienced homelessness (as defined by MVA) for at least two months in high school while attending a Los Angeles County public school
3. Graduated or on-track to graduate high school

The age range of participants was selected to ensure that participants could vividly speak to their high school experiences in Los Angeles County. Further, the 10-year age range provided flexibility to recruit participants outside of school settings. Similarly, it was essential to recruit participants who experienced homelessness for at least two months to ensure that schools and districts had sufficient time to identify the youth and provide intervention. Last, in line with the anti-deficit achievement framework, I recruited youth who had graduated and/or were on track to successfully graduate high school.

Identifying Student Participants and Data Collection

Because being homeless is a stigmatized identity and there are no identifiable locations to find youth who are formerly homeless, identifying formerly homeless youth who fit the participant criteria was a challenging task. Participants were obtained through an extensive three-year outreach initiative with various community stakeholders that worked directly with students who may have experienced homelessness. Twelve youth participants were referred to me through a County-funded service provider such as homeless youth outreach centers or an interim

housing provider. Eight students were identified directly via personal recruitment. During and prior to completing this study, I was actively attending community events and presenting on youth homelessness. Some youth self-disclosed their homeless experiences to me and volunteered to be part of the study. The last three participants recruited for this study were referred by school district homeless liaisons. I intentionally did not recruit many participants directly from homeless liaisons because I wanted to increase my odds of interviewing students who may not have had interactions with their homeless liaisons. Ultimately, 23 youth participants were recruited for this study.

My sample included a diverse group of youth that varied in gender, race and ethnicity, and academic status when interviewed. Table 5 provides a summary of my analytic sample of the youth participants. In my sample, 61% of my youth participants were female, 65% were Black, 60% were high school graduates, and 87% of my sample attended a traditional school district. While 78% of the youth interviewed doubled-up while they experienced homelessness, for many participants, their homeless context varied across time. For example, during her year-and-a-half episode of homeless, one youth, Alina, lived in a motel, in an interim shelter, on the street, and doubled-up.

Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Academic Status	Local Education Agency Type	Homeless Context*
Female:14 Male: 9	White: 1 Latina: 7 Black: 15	High School Student: 9 High School Graduate 14	Traditional District: 20 Charter School: 3	Street/Vehicle: 8 Doubled-Up: 18 Shelter: 5 Motel: 9
Total Youth Interviewed: 23 Total Los Angeles County School Districts Represented: 13				
*Most students’ homeless context changed throughout their homeless episodes.				

Table 5. Summary of Youth Analytic Sample

Each participant engaged in a 30- to 180-minute interview. The interview protocol was a modified version of Seidman's (2013) in-depth phenomenological interviewing structure and was divided into the following three sections: life history, concrete experiences of being homeless in high school, and how they made meaning of their homeless experience. Eight of the interviews were conducted in person prior to the global health pandemic, COVID 19. The remaining interviews were conducted virtually using the Zoom online platform. Each in-person interview was recorded using an audio recorder, then transcribed either personally by me or using the online transcription service Rev.com.

Interviews examined five domains: (1) narratives from participants describing their homeless experience; (2) an account of school practices and people, agencies, and moments that contributed to their success; (3) an account of how participants identified the resources and concerns they considered when deciding to leverage resources; (4) participants' perception of how their race and homeless experience intersected with their goal of graduating high school, and (5) participants' recommendations from their experiential knowledge on how youth experiencing homelessness can be better supported to increase high school completion rates. The interview protocol was separated into three sections and included three to five open-ended questions in each section.

The first section of the interview focused on the participant's life history. I asked participants questions about their childhood experiences prior to high school including contextual information about their family structure and experiences of homelessness prior to high school. Additionally, the first portion of the interview was designed to allow participants to become familiar with the interview process and become more comfortable sharing information about themselves and their experiences.

The second part of the interview prompted participants to detail more concrete experiences of homelessness and navigating high school. I asked the participants to recall a typical day in high school while they were experiencing homeless and the effect that homelessness had on them socially and academically. They also discussed the types of support that they received while experiencing homelessness in school. By the end of section two of the interview, participants provided concrete narratives of how they experienced school while being homeless to answer Research Question #1 and provided context to for answering Research Question #2.

In the final section of the interview, participants made meaning of their experiences and reflected on people, resources, and school practices that supported their actual or eventual high school completion. They discussed the impact of race on their homeless experience and reflected on factors that motivated and helped them to stay on track to graduate high school. Last, participants provided recommendations for supporting youth experiencing homelessness to graduate high school. By the end of third section, participants had provided me with a clear understanding of which resources they perceived as impactful and advice for what schools can improve to support youth impacted by homelessness.

Analysis:

Interviews were analyzed using an inductive bottom-up approach that deployed four cycles of coding and analysis to identify common themes within each participant's narrative (Saldana, 2015). In the first cycle, I coded each interview individually using the in vivo coding method. I read through each interview transcript and highlighted passages that described (1) how and where participants lived while experiencing homelessness; (2) an account of school practices and people, agencies, and moments that contributed to their high school completion;

(3) how they identified the resources, and concerns they considered when deciding to leverage resources; (4) participants' perception of how their race and homeless experience intersected with their goal of graduating high school, and (5) participants' recommendations for how youth experiencing homelessness can be better supported when attempting to graduate high school. In the second cycle of coding, I synthesized each interview's in vivo codes into descriptive codes. While in-vivo codes highlighted phrases within each interview, the descriptive codes organized the phrases across the data corpus into broader categories. The third cycle of coding integrated my descriptive codes into themes that provided insight into my research questions. In the fourth cycle of coding, I established my thematic codes through grouping my descriptive codes and attempting to answer the research questions. I used the theoretical framework community cultural wealth (CCW) to contextualize my findings. The process of parceling out my codes into logical clusters, with CCW in mind, helped me answer my research questions and allowed me to identify major findings within my youth data.

Community Cultural Wealth as an Analytic Tool

Yosso's (2005) community cultural wealth framework (CCW) is a tool of critical race theory. The framework pushes against traditional theorizing of social capital that emphasizes White middle class values while omitting the voice of people of color. CCW posits that the cultural norms of people of color are a form of capital and provides an anti-deficit frame for understanding the various types of resources students of color and communities of color leverage. Yosso (2005) defines community cultural wealth as "an array of knowledge, skills, abilities, and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression (pg. 77)." In addition to social capital, the paper lists six other interconnected forms of capital that communities of color leverage daily: aspirational,

familial, resistance, navigational, and linguistic (see Table 6 for their definitions). Yosso (2005) describes the various forms of capital from an individual perspective (e.g., a student has social capital), while also describing the ways that capital is accumulated across the community to help its members via reciprocal processes. For example, a youth who is experiencing homelessness and spends several nights sleeping at their aunt's house is utilizing their social capital. At the same time, the aunt is exercising her familial capital to provide support to her niece during a difficult time. Understanding such reciprocity is critical because it emphasizes how both stakeholders utilize one another's capital.

Types of Capital	Yosso (2004) Definitions
Aspirational Capital	Aspirational capital refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers.
Familial Capital	Familial capital refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition.
Social Capital	Social capital can be understood as networks of people and community resources.
Navigational Capital	Navigational capital refers to the skills of maneuvering through social institutions. Navigational capital thus acknowledges individual agency within institutional constraints, but it also connects to social networks that facilitate community navigation through places and spaces including schools, the job market, and the health care and judicial systems
Linguistic Capital	Linguistic capital includes the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style.
Resistance Capital	Resistant capital refers those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality.

Table 6. Yosso (2004) Community Cultural Wealth Definition Summary

Cycles of Coding

I utilized five cycles of coding to analyze my data. In this section, I will walk through an example of each cycle of coding, using the following excerpt (See Figure 5):

> Robert: So yeah, he basically kicked me out of his house and I ended up staying with my auntie—my mom's sister. So I was basically sleeping on her couch for literally my whole senior year and my mom was living with him.

First, I highlighted the specific phrases. In this excerpt I highlighted "kicked me out", "staying with my auntie", and "sleeping on her coach." All three of the highlighted phrases describe Robert's lived experience while being homelessness in high school and advances me in answering my first research question: How do students in Los Angeles County navigate the barriers of homelessness to successfully graduate high school?

> Robert: So yeah, he basically kicked me out of his house and I ended up staying with my auntie—my mom's sister. So I was basically sleeping on her couch for literally my whole senior year and my mom was living with him

After I read through all of the student interview data sets and conducted in-vivo coding, my second cycle of coding synthesized each narrative's in-vivo codes into descriptive codes. While in-vivo codes highlighted phrases within each data set, the descriptive codes organized the phrases throughout the data corpus into broader categories. Figure 5 shows three in-vivo codes from three participants. While each in-vivo code describes living with a particular person, all three codes are describing participants' experience of living with another family—so I decided to label my descriptive code "Family providing temporary housing."

The third cycle of coding integrated my descriptive codes into themes that provide insight into my research questions. I established my thematic codes by attempting to answer my research questions through grouping my descriptive codes. The process of parceling out my codes into

logical clusters that answered my research questions allowed me to identify major findings within my data.

The fourth cycle of coding took my thematic codes and organized them using CCW as a lens to further understand my thematic findings. Finally, the fifth cycle of analysis synthesizes Cycle 3 and Cycle 4 to answer the study's research questions.

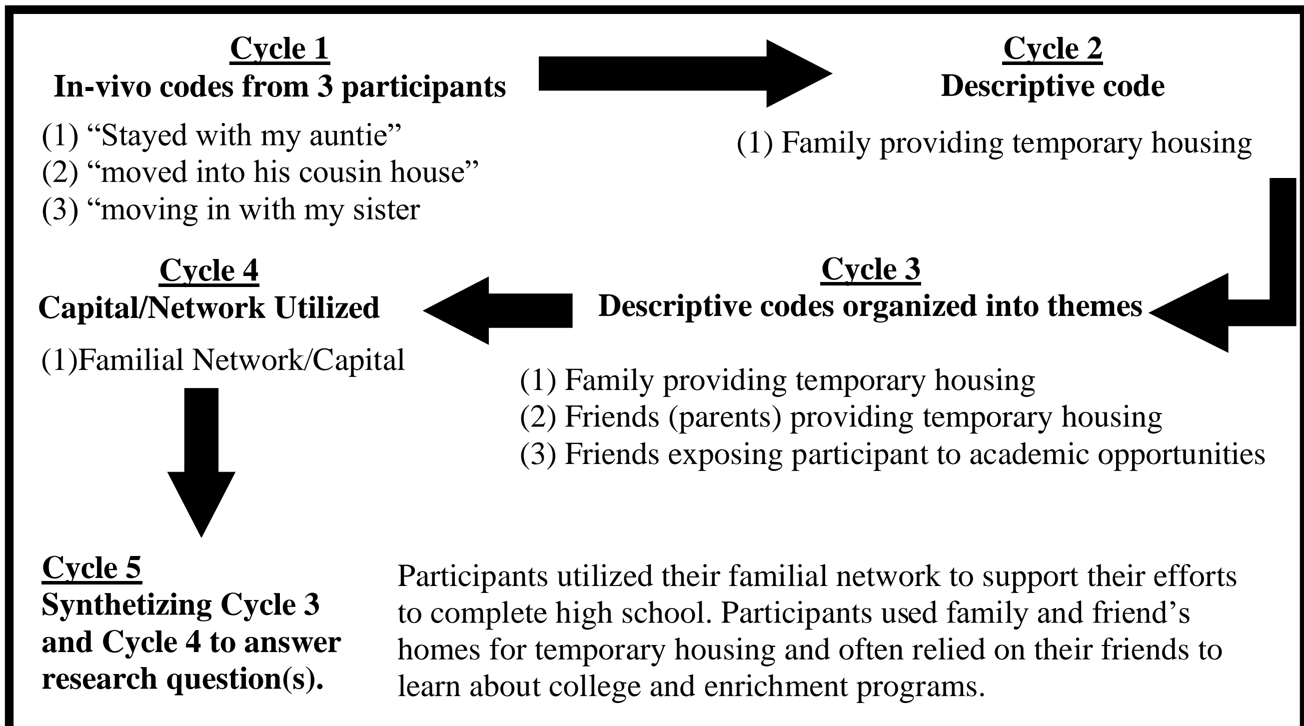


Figure 5. Illustration of Youth Coding Process

RQ2: How does Los Angeles County support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?

To answer the second research question, I leaned on County and City homeless strategic plans and interviews with non-youth participants who worked in community-based organizations, city government, or county agencies. In this section, I first discuss the three documents I used to review the County and City homeless plans and analytical questions that guided my close reading of those documents. I then explain my data collection and analysis

process for interviewing non-youth participants. Next, I share overarching demographic data of non-youth sample participants.

Document Collection and Analysis:

In addition to collecting interview data from county and city leaders working in the homeless service sector, I also reviewed Los Angeles County and local cities' strategic homeless plans between 2015 and 2020. Table 7 provides a description of each document reviewed and the key analytical questions I used to guide my analysis. Each analytical question provided me a focused lens for examining how Los Angeles County and its cities supported students experiencing homelessness.

Strategic Plan Document	Year Published	Document Description	Key Analytical Questions
Compilation of Policy Briefs by Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative	2015	The County of Los Angeles Homeless Initiative convened an initial policy summit on nine key topics related to homelessness. These convenings shaped policy interventions considered to address county homelessness.	Was student homelessness included in the framing of homelessness as a policy issue? What role did school districts play in addressing homelessness?
Approved Strategies to Combat Homelessness by Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative	2016	The approved County strategies to address student homelessness and approved funding allocations for policy interventions.	What stakeholders were involved in crafting this strategic plan? How many strategies directly supported students experiencing homelessness? How much funding did school districts receive to address homelessness?
Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative All City Plans	2018	The document includes comprehensive homeless plans from 40 Los Angeles County cities.	To what extent were schools or school districts included in city

			plans to address homelessness?
Los Angeles City Strategic Plan	2018	Los Angeles strategic plan was not included into Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative Plan	To what extent were schools or school districts included in city plans to address homelessness?
Compton City	2020	Compton strategic plan was not included into Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative Plan	To what extent were schools or school districts included in city plans to address homelessness?

Table 7. List of Major Documents Analyzed in Dissertation

Identifying Service Providers, Policymakers, and Data Collection

In addition to document analysis, I also interviewed policymakers and service providers who were directly involved in establishing policies and serving people experiencing homelessness. To recruit this population, I utilized purposeful sampling and actively recruited senior level administrators who worked directly on matters addressing homelessness. During the process of building relationships with people addressing homelessness in the County to recruit youth for this study, I gained access to senior county and city leaders. I interviewed a total of 17 county and city leaders. As summarized in Table 8, eight participants were leaders in community-based organizations that served people and individuals experiencing homelessness. The community-based organizations they led ranged from youth development programs that served students experiencing homelessness to interim housing shelters for families, youth, and adults. Seven participants worked as senior leaders in County agencies, and two participants served in city government positions. Eight participants were policymakers directly involved in establishing homeless policy, while 10 participants were involved in delivering services to individuals impacted by homelessness. Table 9 and Table 10 have detailed lists of the 17 participants.

Total Participants	Agency Type	Participant Primary Roles
17	Community Based Organization: 8 County Government: 7 City Government: 2	Service Provider: 10 Policymaker: 8*
*One participant worked as a service provider and served on policymaking boards.		

Table 8. Service Provider and Policymakers Data Summary

Each participant engaged in a 30- to 60-minute interview. The interview protocol was semi-structured and centered around the following three questions:

1. How does [participant agency] collaborate with school districts to support students experiencing homelessness in LA County?
2. What are some of the opportunities and barriers [participant agency] encounters when working with school districts?
3. What role did schools or students play in informing the County's homeless policies?

The interviews were conducted virtually using the Zoom online platform. Each interview was recorded on Zoom and then transcribed with the online transcription services Rev.com.

Interview Analysis

The interview analysis for service providers and policymakers consisted of four cycles of coding and followed a similar analytical approach as the one applied to youth participants. The first cycle of coding highlighted key phrases and common responses between each interview participants. The second cycle of coding established descriptive codes across the interviews, while the third cycle of coding clustered my descriptive codes to answer RQ2. In the fourth cycle of analysis for service providers and policymakers, I used the conceptual framework Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) to better contextualize this segment of my findings in the context of having alignment between social, emotional, and academic supports to help students'

achievement. Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) framework has a comprehensive, top-down approach to providing students with support (Eagle et al., 2015). Although MTSS is traditionally applied within various levels of an educational institution (e.g. state district office, school district, and schoolsite) the framework was helpful to understand the tactical and technical skills and conditions necessary to establish coherence between county, city, and school district resources to support youth and families impacted by homelessness. MTSS is discussed in detail in the third data collection segment addressing RQ3.

RQ3: How do two school districts in Los Angeles County successfully support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?"

To answer this inquiry, I used MTSS conceptual framework for this question and selected two school districts in the county to conduct two embedded units of analysis. Each unit included interviews with district homeless liaisons, principals, counselors, teachers, school staff, and community members. In this section, I provide additional context on MTSS as a conceptual framework and how it informed my interview protocols. I then discuss how I selected the two districts for the study and provide demographic data of the participants in my sample. Last, I demonstrate how I used the data that I collected to answer my third research question.

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support Framework

MTSS works to identify students in need of assistance, initiate a response plan, track progress, and make improvements over time. MTSS uses a three-tier system for implementing various degrees of intervention. The framework is intended to meet the academic and social-emotional needs of all students within a school district. Tier 1 supports are universal and created to address the needs of all students. Tier 1 supports include using evidence-based teaching

strategies to ensure all students have access to a safe and academically rigorous learning environment. This tier's interventions also provide frequent formative assessments to identify which students need additional support. Examples of Tier 1 interventions are districtwide reading programs that can be implemented at the classroom level. Tier 2 interventions are provided to students who require more targeted supports that extend beyond universal practices. Typically, a Tier 2 interventions support academic or social-emotional challenges that could be remediated within small group settings. For example, a Tier 2 intervention could be a reading intervention elective for struggling readers that can be implemented on a school level.

Tier 3 interventions within a multi-tiered support system require more specialized support for an acute issue. This level of intervention usually requires one-on-one support from a specialized professional. For example, a Tier 3 intervention could be a student having a regularly scheduled meeting with a reading specialist to improve the student's word decoding skills for increased fluency and comprehension. Tier 3 interventions can occur at the school level; however, they may require district level support or personnel. Currently, variations of the MTSS framework are being used by State Educational Agencies and Local Educational Agencies across the country (Eagle et al., 2015; Farkas et al., 2021) and those agencies often utilize community-based partners to support their tiered interventions.

MTSS Drivers of Success

Successful implementation of a Multi-Tiered System of Support is dependent upon three interrelated drivers: 1) Competency Drivers, 2) Organizational Drivers, and 3) Leadership Drivers (Fixsen & Blase, 2008). Competency drivers refer to the availability of competent, well-trained staff. Organizational drivers refer to thoughtful, organized administrative processes that are data driven and data responsive. Leadership drivers encompass adaptive and technical skills

of the leaders in charge of executing the overall system (Fixsen, Naoom, Blase, Friedman, & Wallace, 2005). I used MTSS and the three organizational drivers associated with its implementation to organize my protocols for school and school district personnel interviewed for this dissertation. The MTSS framework also informed my analytical approach to understand the alignment of resources between the county, city, district, and high school when supporting students experiencing homelessness. Next, I discuss the school districts that were selected for this project.

Identifying School Districts and Data Collection

As discussed earlier in this chapter, I sought out school districts that recorded graduation rates above the county average for students experiencing homelessness. With the anti-deficit achievement framework in mind, I used the following criteria to select two school districts for my study:

1. Located in Los Angeles County
2. Graduates at least 75% of its students experiencing homelessness in the 2017-18 school year
3. Has a minimum of 50 high school students experiencing homelessness enrolled in the school district high school in the 2017-18 school year
4. Is currently addressing student homelessness via a district down approach

Eleven potential school districts within Los Angeles County fit the study's criteria. I emailed each school district superintendent requesting permission to conduct my study and moved forward with the first two districts that consented to the study. I refer to those two districts as Westview Unified School District (USD) and Richstead Unified School District.

Westfield USD has a total of eight schools and served a little over 7, 000 students in the 2017-18 school year. The Westfield USD student demographics are racially and ethnically

diverse—27% of the student population are White, 13% are Black, 37% are Latino/a/a, 11% are Asian American. One third of the school district identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged and the district's high schools served about 50 students who experienced homelessness. In the 2017-18 school year, 79% of the school district's students experiencing homelessness graduated within four years.

While Richstead is located approximately 15 miles away from Westview, its school district composition is starkly different. Richstead USD has a total of 32 schools and served 22,975 students during the 2017-18 school year. The Richstead USD student population is almost exclusively Black and Latino/a/a, 18% and 79% respectively. Ninety-five percent of students in Richstead USD were identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged and the district's high schools served 91 students who experienced homelessness. In the 2017-18 school year, 79% of the school district's students experiencing homelessness graduated within four years. Table 14 provides a summary of each district's student population.

Identifying School and Community Staff for Interviews

Once I received approval from each school district to conduct research, I then contacted the district's homeless liaison to schedule an interview and opportunity to observe them performing their professional tasks. Once I interviewed the homeless liaisons, I asked for each liaison to connect me with high school staff and administrators. After connecting with a staff member, I utilized snowball sampling to connect with additional teachers, counselors, and staff. During my data collection process, both school district homelessness liaisons left their position and were replaced. I interviewed the new homeless liaisons twice—the first interview was on their technical role, and the second interview focused on their ability to build partnerships. In total, I interviewed 17 participants from Richstead and Westview USD. Eight participants were

school staff from Richstead USD; nine were from Westview USD. In each school district, I talked with one principal, three high school teachers, two counseling staff, and a current and former homeless liaison. At Westview USD, I also had the opportunity to interview a school district school board member. Table 9a and Table 9b provide an overview of the school staff I interviewed.

Pseudonym	Race /Ethnicity	Title of High School Staff	School District
1. Carlos Medina	Black/ Latino	Principal	Richstead USD
2. Jeffrey Lewis	Black	Teacher	Richstead USD
3. Abby Thorne	White	Teacher	Richstead USD
4. Nate Arnold	Black	Teacher	Richstead USD
5. Michael Parks	Black	Former District Homeless Liaison	Richstead USD
6. Dean Stewart	Black	School District Homeless Liaison	Richstead USD
7. Yvonne Henderson	Black	Counselor	Richstead USD
8. Jill Black	Black	Counselor	Richstead USD

*Table 9*a. *Richstead School Staff Interview Participants Demographics*[2]

Pseudonym	Race /Ethnicity	Title of High School Staff	School District
1. Autumn Brown	Black	District School Board Member	Westview USD
2. Leslie Harper	Black	Principal	Westview USD
3. Marcos Perez	Latina	Teacher	Westview USD
4. Greg Coleman	Black	Teacher	Westview USD
5. Joseph Markin	White	Teacher	Westview USD
6. Monique Ramirez	Latina	District Homeless Liaison	Westview USD
7. Dwight Wright	White	Former District Homeless Liaison	Westview USD
8. Janet Marie	White	Counselor	Westview USD
9. Jessica Matthews	White	Counseling Staff	Westview USD

Table 9b. Westview School Staff Interview Participants Demographics[3]

[2] Some interview participants' racial or gender identifiers were altered to protect participants' anonymity.

[3] Some interview participants' racial or gender identifiers were altered to protect participants' anonymity.

In addition to interviewing school staff at both districts, I also interviewed community-based organizations who partnered, either formally or informally, with each school district. Table 10 represents a subset of the non-youth participants in Table 13. Three of the eight community-based organizations in Table 10 worked with both districts and could discuss both districts' policy and practices. In addition to responding to broader county questions listed in the second part of my data collection process, these organizations were able to share the type of partnerships they have established with Richstead and Westview.

Pseudonym	Race /Ethnicity	Title[4]	School District
1. Cynthia Ford	Black	Executive Director of Open Hands for Richstead	Richstead USD
2. Akin Lawal	Black	Program Manager for Leaders of the Future	Richstead USD
3. Jesse Smith	Black	Executive Director of Academics on the Move Tutoring Program	Richstead and Westview USD
4. Sandra Hines	Black	Executive Director of Regional Homeless Shelter	Richstead and Westview USD
5. Monica Price	Black	Program Manager of Academics on the Move Tutoring Program	Richstead and Westview USD
6. Kendrick Marcy	Black	Manager of Youth Development Organization	Richstead USD
7. Claire Watson	Black	Executive Director of Regional Access Center for Homeless Services	Richstead USD
8. Vanessa Akinson	Black	Manager of Regional Access Center for Homeless Services	Richstead USD

[4] The organizational names discussed in this study are pseudonyms.

Table 10. Participants from Community Based Organizations Demographics

Analysis:

I used MTSS as a frame to analyze interviews from each school district's homeless liaison, school staff, and teachers. The interviews involved the examination of the following four sub-questions from RQ3:

1. How do school districts leverage school personnel, district level personnel, and community resources to serve and respond to the academic and social-emotional needs of students experiencing homelessness so they can ultimately graduate from high school and college, career ready?
2. To what extent (if any) does the racial composition of the homeless student population inform district strategies and interventions?
3. To what extent (if any) do the individual high school teachers and staff provide supplemental supports for students experiencing homelessness beyond the scope and supports of their school district? And, how effective are these supports?
4. To what extent (if any) do the resources in a city and county help or hinder the school district from supporting students experiencing homelessness?

Using the school staff interview data, I used an inductive bottom-up approach that deployed four cycles of coding and analysis to identify common themes to answer RQ3. The first cycle consisted of coding each interview individually using the in-vivo coding method. I read through each interview and highlighted critical phrases and passages that describe (1) district level strategies for implementing supports to students experiencing homelessness, (2) how the district/school identifies and leverages external resources, (3) staff's overall awareness of

McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison, and (4) staff recommendations from their experiential knowledge on how youth experiencing homelessness can be better supported within education systems to increase high school completion rates.

My second cycle of coding synthesized each interview's in-vivo codes into descriptive codes. While in-vivo codes highlighted phrases within each interview, the descriptive codes organized the phrases across the interviews within each case into a broader categories (Saldana, 2015). The third cycle of coding disaggregated my descriptive codes into three buckets based on the three implementation drivers (i.e., competency, organizational, leadership). In my fourth cycle, I established thematic codes through grouping my descriptive codes within each driver category and attempting to answer RQ4 for each case. The process of parceling out my codes into logical clusters that answered my research questions helped me identify major findings within this data segment. While I conducted my analysis process for each embedded unit independently, I attempted to use the same descriptive codes throughout each unit.

The fourth cycle of analysis used a cross-unit synthesis model to highlight broader cross-unit patterns. During the fourth cycle of analysis, I extracted the findings that were elevated at each previous analytical stage across each district and synthesized them the answer my research questions. This analytical process allowed me to make analytic generalizations or inferences across districts while still acknowledging the contextualized variabilities within each unit (Yin, 2018).

Audit of City-registered Non-profits

While my interviews and observations with school staff and community-based organizations were my main source for answers to RQ3, I also conducted an analysis of non-profit organizations for both the city of Westview and the city of Richstead. I decided to conduct

an environmental scan of non-profits after repeatedly hearing about the discrepancy in the number of organizations available for each city. I used the online non-profit evaluation site, GuideStar, to view key details of all the non-profit organizations in both cities as of September 2021. GuideStar provides a list of all active non-profits that includes the year the IRS approved the organization as a non-profit, the non-profit's focus area, and the organization's most recent gross receipts and assets. GuideStar receives its information from each non-profit's annual IRS fillings. I compiled a list and created a database of all the non-profit organizations in Westview and Richstead that were actively registered on GuideStar (See Table 11). The non-profit audit, served as an additional validity check for salient findings across my embedded units of analysis.

City	**Total Non-Profits Reviewed**
Westview	407
Richstead	402

Table 11. Total Number of Non-Profits Reviewed in Westview and Richstead

Network Impoverishment as an Overarching Frame

When consolidating my themes from each research question, I used network impoverishment as my final analytical frame. The network impoverishment frame comes from racial equity literature on supporting people experiencing homelessness. Olivet et al. (2018) defines network impoverishment as "a phenomenon in which it is not just an individual or family who is experiencing poverty; the network itself functions in an impoverished state." Olivet et al., 2021 expounds on this definition by stating that an individual's economic instability can compound the instability of an entire family or social network. For example, a family may decide to allow a struggling relative to double-up in their rented apartment, however that decision now puts the host family in a precarious living situation and jeopardizes their housing stability as

well. The issue for the individual who experiences homelessness is not that he does not have a social network, but rather, that his social network does not have the resources to help him. Olivet et al. (2018 and 2021) states that Black families and families of color are more likely to find themselves in a network of impoverishment as a result of institutional racism in the housing and employment markets that prevent wealth accumulation.

This dissertation draws from and builds upon community cultural wealth, multi-tiered systems of support, and network impoverishment to assess the health of the institutional networks embedded within Los Angeles County and the cities Westview and Richstead. I used each analytical frame to make sense of different sections of my findings; however, I used an inductive approach to synthesize my data corpus and construct a new theoretical framework that I call Impoverished Institutional Network (IIN). I define Impoverished Institutional Network as a public institution's inability to provide the necessary financial, social, cultural, and organizational capital to adequately support historically marginalized and vulnerable populations, while becoming overly reliant on punitive practices or punitive public institutions like the criminal justice and foster care system.

In this chapter, I discussed my research questions and the data, frameworks, and analytical processes I used to establish my major themes. In Chapter 4, I will provide a comprehensive view of Los Angeles County with a structural racism lens as the critical context for understanding this study's findings.

Pseudonyms	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Graduation Year/ Grade	School District	Context of Homelessness	Recruitment
Yasmin	Female	Latina	10th	Clark, Achievement Charter	Doubled Up, Motel	County Service Provider
Jason	Male	Black	10th	Eagle	Street, Motel	County Service Provider
Joseph	Male	Black	11th	Eagle	Street, Motel	County Service Provider
Lisa	Female	Black	2020	Richstead	Street, Doubled-Up	District Homeless Liaison
Isabella	Female	Latina	2018	Richstead	Doubled-Up	District Homeless Liaison
Robert	Male	Black	2013	Richstead, Brooking	Doubled-Up	Personal
Nikki	Female	Black	2020	Richstead, Brooking, Wade	Street, Doubled-Up	County Service Provider
Natasha	Female	Latina	12th	Horrace	Doubled Up, Motel	County Service Provider
Elizabeth	Female	Black	2016	Lincoln	Street, Doubled-Up	County Service Provider
Jeffrey	Male	Black	2017	Lincoln	Street, Shelter	County Service Provider
Alina	Female	Black	2017	Lincoln	Street, Doubled-Up, Motel, Shelter	Personal
Destiny	Female	Black	2013	Lincoln	Doubled-Up, Shelter	Personal
Dayon	Male	Black	2019	Lincoln	Doubled-Up	Personal
Maya	Female	Latina	9th	Lincoln	Street, Doubled-Up, Motel	County Service Provider
Eva	Female	Latina	10th	Lincoln	Doubled-Up, Motel	County Service Provider
Helen	Female	White	2018	Lincoln	Doubled-Up	Personal
Amelia	Female	Latina	10th	Lincoln/ Charter High	Doubled-Up, Motel	County Service Provider
Terrel	Male	Black	Student	Pacifica	Doubled-Up, Shelter	County Service Provider
Rashad	Male	Black	Student	Pacifica	Doubled-Up, Shelter	County Service Provider
Jamelle	Female	Black	2012	Pacifica	Doubled-Up	Personal
Marcus	Male	Black	2015	Valley	Street, Doubled-Up	Personal
Kevin	Male	Black	2012	Wade	Motel	Personal
Alicia	Female	Latina	2021	Westview	Shelter	District Homeless Liaison

Table 12. Youth Participant Demographics

Pseudonyms	Gender	Race/ Ethnicity	Title Description	Policymaker or Service Provider	Broader Category
Jacob Martin	Male	Black	Senior City Official in Richstead	Policymaker	City Government
Chris Larkin	Male	White	Westview Homeless Committee Chair	Policymaker	City Government
Cynthia Ford	Female	Black	Executive Director of Homeless Resource Organization	Service Provider	Community Based Organization
Akin Lawal	Male	Black	Manager of Youth Development Organization	Service Provider	Community Based Organization
Jesse Smith	Male	Black	Executive Director of Homeless Education Organization	Service Provider	Community Based Organization
Sandra Hines	Female	Black	Executive Director of Regional Homeless Shelter	Service Provider	Community Based Organization
Claire Watson	Female	Black	Executive Director of Regional Access Center for Homeless Services	Service Provider & Policymaker	Community Based Organization
Vanessa Akinson	Female	Black	Manager of Regional Access Center for Homeless Services	Service Provider	Community Based Organization
Monica Price	Female	Black	Manager of Homeless Education Organization	Service Provider	Community Based Organization
Kendrick Marcy	Male	Black	Manager of Youth Development Organization	Service Provider	Community Based Organization
Martin Johnson	Male	White	Senior Director in LA County	Service Provider	County Government

Sarah Dennis	Male	White	Senior Executive of Homeless Services for the County	Policymaker	County Government
Iris Sanchez	Female	Latina	Senior Leader of Homeless Services for the County	Policymaker	County Government
Luis White	Male	White	Senior Leader of Homeless Services for the County	Policymaker	County Government
Mary Taylor	Female	White	Senior Director in LA County	Policymaker	County Government
John Monroe	Male	White	Manager of Regional Access Center for Homeless Services	Service Provider	County Government
Ericka Tesla	Female	Latina	Senior Leader of Homeless Services for the County	Policymaker	County Government

Table 13. Non-Youth Participant Demographics[5]

School Districts	**Total Number of Schools**	**Total Cumulative Enrollment**	**District Demographic by Percentage**	**Percent of Socioeconomically Disadvantage**	**Number of High School Students Experiencing Homelessness**	**Graduation Rate for Students Experiencing Homelessness**
Westview USD	High School: 2 Middle School: 1	7,248	White: 26.5% Black: 12.9%	33%	50	79%

[5] Some interview participants racial or gender identifiers were altered to protect participant's anonymity.

	Elementary School: 5		Latino/a: 37.2% Asian:10.6%			
Richstead USD	High School: 5 Middle School: 7 Elementary School: 21	22,975	Black: 18% Latino/a: 79% Other: 03%	95%	91	79%

Table 14. School District Demographics

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXTUALIZING LOS ANGELES COUNTY WITH A STRUCTURAL RACISM LENS

Introduction

To gain an accurate and thorough understanding of student homelessness in Los Angeles County, it is imperative to first examine the landscape of the county with a structural racism lens. Such analysis illuminates racial disparities in the county and structural inequities that create barriers to supporting youth experiencing homelessness. Equally important, such analysis highlights how social policies have created barriers and perpetuated disparities for youth experiencing homelessness across time.

The purpose of this chapter is to set a context for the findings of this dissertation. In the first section of this chapter, I define structural racism and highlight the vast and disproportionately Black homeless population of the United States. Then, I provide an overview of a recent Los Angeles County commission reports— A Portrait of Los Angeles County (2018), to highlight disparities in quality of life for different racial-ethnic groups and various geographic regions in the county. Building from the findings of A Portrait of Los Angeles County (2018), I discuss the historical trends, policies, and interactions between different markets and institutions—specifically, housing, banking, labor, transportation, foster care, and education—to illustrate how specific regions in Los Angeles County came to be racialized spaces where disparities persist.

Defining Structural Racism

Structural racism refers to the ways that race and class have historically been implicated in the structure of the American political economy (Bonilla-Silva, 1997). Unlike interpersonal racism, structural racism is not premised upon the actions, motivations, or beliefs of individuals.

Although individual racists may play a role in perpetuating racism and racial disparities, the operation of the market (particularly financial and housing markets), the political system, and institutions such as banks, schools, the criminal justice system, and the healthcare system, all work to reinforce the marginalization of certain racial minorities. As such, structural racism is a form of "racism without racists" (Bonilla-Silva, 2010, p. 4). While on a day-to-day basis the various systems may operate without explicit racial objectives, the adverse impact of policy is almost always greatest among those who have been historically subjugated, oppressed, and discriminated against, thereby making Black people a frequent and disproportionately impacted population. Further, racially discriminatory policies and practices are often codified in neighborhoods in which Black people have been historically confined (Ong & Gonzalez, 2019).

Structural racism is rarely cited as a cause of homelessness among Black youth in the United States. A long history of racial domination, discrimination, and the current political economy of the United States, however, have greatly contributed to the emergence of a vast and disproportionately Black homeless population. Since 1980, Black people have represented approximately 40% of the national homeless population while only comprising 12.5% of the general U.S. population (Baxter & Hopper, 1981). Today, Black youth are 83% more likely to experience homelessness than youth of other races (Morton et al., 2018). Despite the disproportionate rate of homelessness among Black adults and youth in the U.S., racialized patterns of homelessness have gone largely unrecognized by policymakers (Jones, 2016). Researchers who study adult homelessness are starting to explore racial inequities within the homelessness population (Olivet et al., 2021; Paul et al., 2020), but similar shifts have been slow to emerge in K-12 education policy.

Examining Los Angeles County with a Racialized Lens

While racial disparities do not necessarily establish structural racism as a root cause of inequality, they signal a need for deeper analysis of a problem. In 2018, the research team for Social Science Research Council, Measure of America, released a report called A Portrait of Los Angeles County. The report revealed stark racial-ethnic disparities in Los Angeles County with Black people being the most negatively impacted. The report utilized a national index measure called The American Human Development Index (HDI) to assess the quality of life for people living in Los Angeles County. The HDI uses official government data to measure "three fundamental and interrelated building blocks of a life of freedom, choice, and opportunity" (pg.9). The building blocks include 1) a long and healthy life, 2) access to knowledge, and 3) decent standard of living.

To assess a long and healthy life in Los Angeles County, Measure of America utilized mortality data from the California Department of Public Health and the US Census. To assess access to knowledge, they used school enrollment data for people aged three to 24, and educational degree attainment for individuals over the age of 25. Last, to assess decent standard of living, they used median earnings data from the American Community Survey for all workers (full-time and part-time) ages 16 and older. The three dimensions were indexed on a scale of 0-10. Scores between 9 and 10 denoted the highest quality of life and represented what the report refers to as "Glittering LA." Conversely, scores below 3 denoted the lowest quality of life and represented "Precarious LA," and scores between 5 and 6.99 represented the average quality of life in the United States, which the report referred to as "Main Street LA."

Table 15 shows HDI scores in Los Angeles County by race and ethnicity as stated in the A Portrait of Los Angeles County Report (Measure of America, 2018). The table shows that HDI

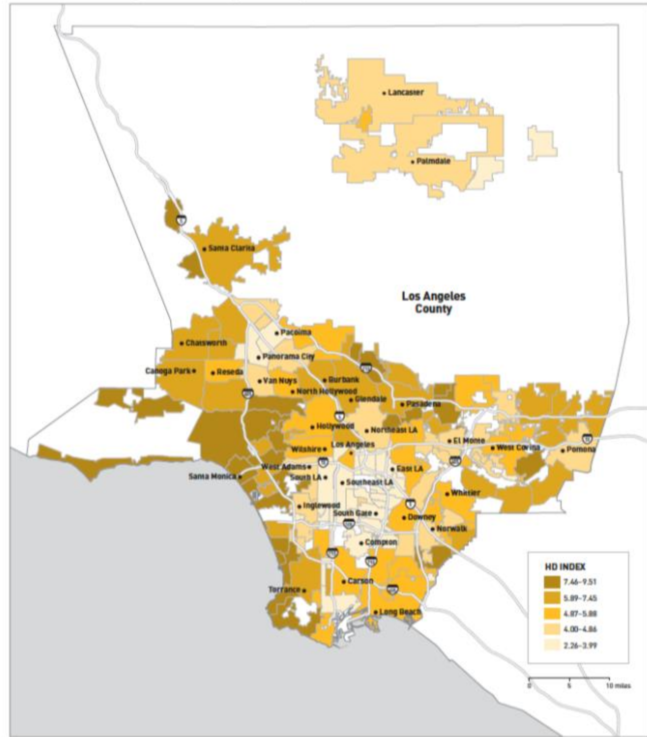
scores for Native American, Black, and Latino/a Angelenos were between 40 and 47 percent lower than those of White Angelenos. For Black Angelenos, the average life expectancy was a half-decade shorter than that of their White neighbors and a full decade shorter than that of Asian American Angelenos. The report concluded that differences in the quality of life between White and Asian people compared to that of Black, Native American, and Latino people are shaping very divergent lived experiences in Los Angeles County.

Human Development Index by Race and Ethnicity								
Racial/Ethnic Demographic	HDI	HDI % Difference	Life Expectancy	Life Expectancy Year Difference	Education Index	Education Index % Difference	Median Earnings	Median Earning % Difference
Asian	7.37	+5.7%	87.3	+7 years	7.12	-1.4%	$38,016	-22%
White	6.96	0%	80.9	0	7.02	0	$47,607	0
Native American	4.64	-40%	76.9	-4 years	3.77	-60%	$35, 429	-29%
Black	4.54	-42%	75.6	-5 years	4.64	-40%	31,433	-41%
Latino/a	4.32	-47%	84.4	+3 years	2.80	-86%	$22,617	-71%

Table 15. Human Development Index by Race and Ethnicity

Racialized Spaces

Not only did Measure of America (2018) find that the quality of life for racial-ethnic groups varied significantly in Los Angeles County, but it also found that HDI scores in LA County varied at the city and neighborhood level as well. Map 1 is a heat map of HDI in Los Angeles County. Darker hues of gold represent regions with high HDI scores, and the lighter, yellow hues represent neighborhoods and cities with lower HDI scores. As illustrated in Map 4.1 a significant concentration of light yellow hues is visible in the South Los Angeles and Southeast Los Angeles regions of the county—two of several regions representing Precarious LA.



Map 1: Human Development Index Map of Los Angeles County from the A Portrait of Los Angeles County Report (2018)

Black and Latino/a residents make up 98% of Precarious Los Angeles, despite only comprising 56% of the general county population. Additionally, Black and Latino/a residents are underrepresented in areas of LA County that have high HDI scores. Table 16 shows the different community clusters identified via HDI scores in Measure of America (2018) by race. Black and Latino/a Angelenos are underrepresented in the top three community clusters and overrepresented in the lowest two. Black residents in Los Angeles County, in particular, are more than twice as likely to be represented in areas with the lowest quality of life than any other

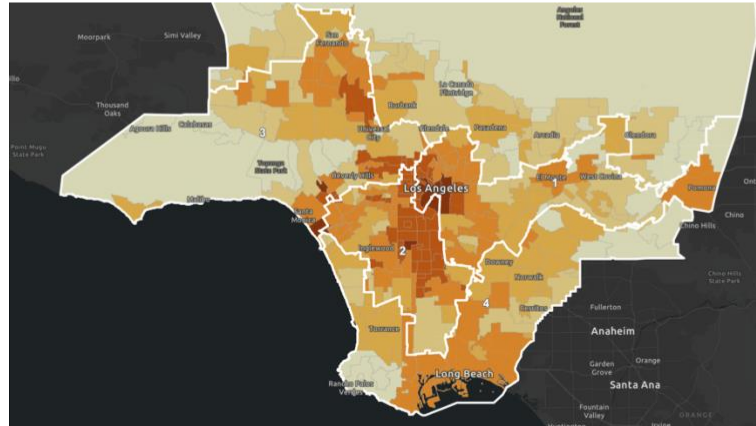
community.

The Five LA County Clusters	Percent of White Residents	Disproportionality * Above or Below 26%	Percent of Black Residents	Disproportionality Above or Below 8%	Percent of Latino/a Residents	Disproportionality Above or Below 48%
Glittering LA (9+ HDI)	65.4%	2.5	1.4%	.175	8.5%	.18
Elite Enclave LA (7-8.99 HDI)	54.9%	2.1	5.7%	.71	16.3%	.33
Main Street LA (5-6.99 HDI)	34.1%	1.3	4.2%	.53	36.7%	.76
Struggling LA (3-4.99 HDI)	14.3%	.55	10.4%	1.3	63.7%	1.3
Precarious LA (Below 3)	.8%	.03	17.7%	2.2	80.8%	1.7
An equal proportion ratio would equal 1. The smaller the disproportionality number, the more underrepresented the racial group is compared to the general county population. The larger the disproportionality number, the more overrepresented the racial group is compared to the general county population.						

Table 16. A Portrait of Los Angeles County Disproportionality Rates by Community Clusters

In addition to racial-ethnic disparities, Measure of America (2018) also found that low HDI neighborhoods in LA County had higher pollution, school pushout, and unemployment rates than high HDI neighborhoods. Such disparities are known to directly impact access to education opportunities for youth, as living in divested, racially segregated communities dramatically restricts access to critical infrastructure (Berliner, 2009; Dhaliwal et al., 2021; P. A. Noguera & Alicea, 2021). Further, an accumulation of disadvantage in communities has been found to contribute to widespread school failure (Noguera et al., (2019).

In the same year that Measure of America (2018) was released, Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority (LAHSA) commissioned a report that focused specifically on the Los Angeles County homeless population by race (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2018). The LAHSA (2018) report revealed that in addition to being overrepresented in Precarious LA regions, Black people in Los Angeles County were also significantly overrepresented in the homeless population. Despite representing approximately eight percent of the overall county population, Black residents represented 40% of individuals experiencing homelessness. Further, Precarious LA regions also represented communities disproportionately impacted by homelessness, as shown in Map 2.



Map 2: Heat Map of Los Angeles County Homeless Population from Los Angeles County Chief Executive Office (2021)

The LAHSA report collected and analyzed data qualitative data from 13 countywide town hall meetings, a total of 10 individual and focus group interviews with people experiencing homelessness, and eight community listening sessions. Quantitative administrative data was collected via the County Homeless Management Information System (CHMIS). Ultimately, LAHSA (2018) concluded that in Los Angeles County structural racism is a key driver of racial disparity in the homeless population. The report argued, as I will argue in this chapter, that explicitly racist policies and practices of the past created the conditions upon which current institutions function and produce disparate outcomes today. The result of this legacy is concentrated areas of cumulative disadvantage in historically Black communities and

disproportionate rates of homelessness in those communities in particular. In the following sections of this chapter, I discuss historically racist housing policies and their negative impact on Black people in the United States and, more specifically, in Los Angeles County. I then explain how the employment, transportation, foster care, and education systems interact to reproduce negative outcomes for Black and Latino/a people (and by extension Black and Latino/a students) and historically Black spaces.

Contextualizing the Current Racial Disparities in LA County

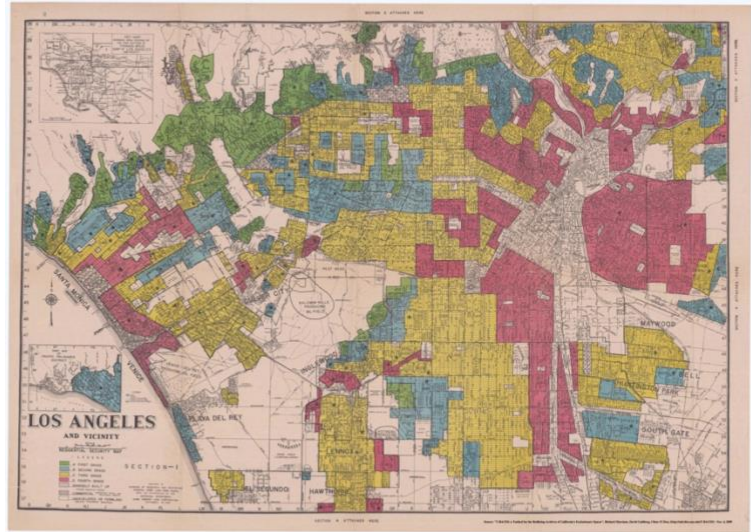
Segregation and Housing Discrimination Against Black and Latino/a Families

To understand how structural racism contributes to the educational disparities and hardship experienced by Black homeless youth, we must start by analyzing how regulations related to homeownership and racial discrimination in the rental housing market prevent Black families (and in many cases Latino/a families) from obtaining and maintaining stable housing. For at least 35 years, starting in the 1930s, Black families were intentionally prevented from acquiring federal mortgage loans via discriminatory redlining practices (Gotham, 2000). Moreover, Black families who were able to obtain homes were forced to pay high interest loans. Their houses' value was also more likely to depreciate and foreclosure occurred more frequently than among White homebuyers (Newman & Holupka, 2016). Discriminatory federal housing policies ultimately led to large concentrations of impoverished Black people living in housing projects and ghettos throughout the United States during the 1950s and 1960s (Rothstein, 2017).

Home Ownership Discrimination

The Great Depression devastated America's housing market and forced the federal government to establish policies to address an unprecedented number of foreclosures (Gotham,

2000). As part of The New Deal, Franklin D. Roosevelt established Homeowners' Loan Corporation (HOLC) in 1933. While HOLC helped refinance more than a million mortgages between 1933 and 1935, it also established a standardized method for appraising land based on a neighborhood's racial composition.



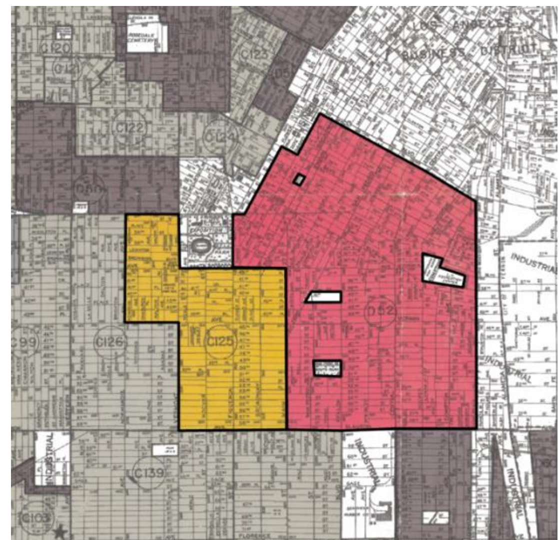
Map 3. HOLC Map of Los Angeles County

HOLC outlined four categories to evaluate a neighborhood's value and eligibility for a federal loan—the highest appraisal category went to all-White neighborhoods and the lowest went to communities with Black residents and/or communities identified as at risk of racial infiltration. The HOLC appraisal policy became known as "redlining" because predominantly Black communities were outlined in red on HOLC's residential maps and they were rarely provided with federally subsidized loans (Katznelson, 2005).

Map 3 is a HOLC Map of Los Angeles County in 1939. Many of the Precarious LA regions outlined in Measure of America (2018) were once redlined, including South Los Angeles—one of the most concentrated Black communities in the county. In reference to one section of South Los Angeles identified as D52 on the HOLC map, an appraiser wrote the following description to justify having classified the region as hazardous:

Terrain: No flood or construction hazards. Land improved 90%. Zoning is mixed, but improvements are largely single-family dwellings. Conveniences are all readily available. This is the "melting pot" area of Los Angeles and has long been thoroughly blighted. The Negro concentration is largely in the eastern two thirds of the area. Original construction was evidently of fair quality, but lack of proper maintenance is notable. Population is uniformly of poor quality and many improvements are in a state of dilapidation. This area is a fit location for a slum clearance project. The area is accorded a "lowered" grade.

While the appraiser judged the land quality in region D52 as “fair”, he used the concentration of Black residents to justify his conclusion that the region was “low red” and thus unworthy of government backed loans. A closer image of Map 4 illustrates D52 and its adjacent block, C125. Despite its immediate proximity, C125 received a higher appraisal because it did not have any Black residents.



Map 4. Section D52 and C125 of Los Angeles County HOLC Map

Racial Restrictive Covenants

While the presence of Black residents decreased a region’s qualification for government backed loans, a region’s qualification would increase if it had racist provisions to keep Black people (and other marginalized racial-ethnic groups) out of the community. One discriminatory method explicitly discussed by HOLC appraisers was racial restrictive covenants. Restrictive covenants were legal agreements embedded in property deeds that made homeowners agree to never sell or lease to Black and other marginalized racial-ethnic groups. These types of

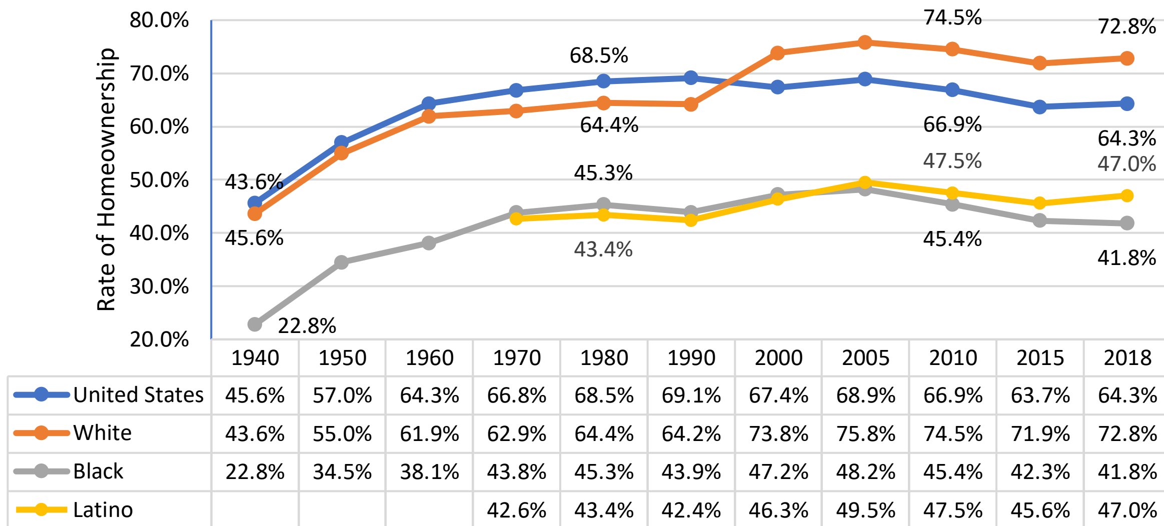
covenants became common at the start of the Great Migration in approximately 1916. By the 1940s, about 80% of properties in Los Angeles had restrictive covenants preventing Black families from leasing or buying homes (Commission on Civil Rights, 1973). In fact, HOLC used restrictive covenants as a tool for assessing communities. For example, a block of land in Culver City (B98) was deemed "substandard", however it received a blue ranking in part because of its restrictive racial covenants. The appraisal read as follows:

> Terrain: Low lying flat. A distinct drainage problem creates slight construction hazard. Land improved 20% - Concentration of improvements on three streets, balance sparsely improved. Deed restrictions give wide latitude in matter of improvements but limit to single-family dwellings and protect against racial hazards. This is a new area and conveniences are all inadequate and distant. Many dead-end and unimproved streets. This area is a promotional enterprise which is being almost wholly financed with FHA Title I loans. It is currently in the primary stage of development. Construction is very largely substandard. Architectural designs are pleasing and harmonious. Lot values run around $7 per front foot. It is located in undeveloped territory, much of which is low lying and swampy. Convenience to industrial employment, particularly three motion picture studios, is a favorable factor. Oil wells are located within one half mile to the west. It is exceedingly hard area to grade but, after reviewing all factors, it is thought best to give it a provisional "low blue" designation.

Despite lying on low and swampy land, B98 was deemed desirable by HOLC appraisers partly because of strong racial covenants that prevented Black residents from living in the community. The second most significant factor for the land ranking was that the area already received

federally backed financing. Receiving a low blue designation in 1939 ultimately set the foundation for Culver City to transform from underdeveloped, swampy land into one of the most expensive areas in Los Angeles County.

The redlining practices of HOLC became the standard appraisal policy for both public and private investing institutions throughout the country and the practice was not banned until the Fair Housing Act of 1968. By then, however, more than 30 years of divestment from the federal government established densely impoverished Black communities stripped of the ability to accrue wealth via property ownership (Gotham, 2000). As illustrated in Figure 6, homeownership for Black Americans has increased by less than 10% in past 65 years. In 1950, 34.5% of Black Americans owned a home and currently only 42% of Black Americans are homeowners.



	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2018
United States	45.6%	57.0%	64.3%	66.8%	68.5%	69.1%	67.4%	68.9%	66.9%	63.7%	64.3%
White	43.6%	55.0%	61.9%	62.9%	64.4%	64.2%	73.8%	75.8%	74.5%	71.9%	72.8%
Black	22.8%	34.5%	38.1%	43.8%	45.3%	43.9%	47.2%	48.2%	45.4%	42.3%	41.8%
Latino				42.6%	43.4%	42.4%	46.3%	49.5%	47.5%	45.6%	47.0%

Sources: Homeownership Rates from 1940 to 1990 (Haurin, Rosenthal, & Duda, 2005);
Homeownership Rates from 2000 to 2018 (U.S. Census, 2018).

Figure 6. United States Homeownership Rates by Race, Ethnicity between 1940-2018

Reverse Redlining

Equally devastating, for Black Americans owning property has not guaranteed housing stability or wealth accumulation (Katznelson, 2005). In the 1990's subprime loans became

another practice with disproportionately negative impacts on Black Americans. In a process known as *reverse redlining*, Black Americans (and in many cases poor White Americans and Latino Americans) were targeted for high interest, high-risk mortgage loans (Nier III & Cyr, 2010; Faber 2013). Data collected by the Home Mortgage Disclose Act found that low-risk Black American borrowers were 65% more likely than White borrowers with similar profiles to receive a subprime home purchase loan (Nier & St. Cyr, 2010).

Reverse redlining was common practice in Los Angeles County. Ong and González's book, *Uneven Urbanscape* (2019) provides a geographical analysis of Los Angeles County and explores its predatory loan practices. Table 17 summarizes findings from Ong and González (2019) via an outline of the racial-ethnic groups who received risky loans in Los Angeles County between 2005 and 2007. Results showed that Black and Latino/a borrowers received subprime loans at three times the rate of White borrowers. The same disparity was found at the neighborhood level. In some cases, bank branches in majority Black and Latino/a communities provided subprime loans as the default offer, even in cases where the client was eligible for a lower interest loan. Ong and González (2019) concluded, "just being a minority and living in a community of color by themselves are risk factors…both individual ethnorace and spatial ethnorace increased the odds of having a risky loan (pg. 87).

	Loan-to-Income	**% Subprime**	**Junior-Lien**
All Borrowers	.24	29.7%	35.4%
Borrowers by Race-Ethnicity			
White	.16	13.4%	23.1%
Asian	.24	18.5%	27.4%

Black	.24	49.1%	47.4%
Latino/a	.34	45.7%	53.7%
Race-Ethnic Demographics of Neighborhoods			
White	.17	16.2%	24.6%
Asian	.26	14.9%	23.1%
Black	.30	52.4%	49.2%
Latino/a	.32	49%	50.9%

Table 17. Characteristics of Home Mortgages in Los Angeles County between 2005 and 2007

Foreclosures

As a result of having received high interest loans, low- and medium-income Black Americans and Latinos were most likely to lose their net wealth and face housing foreclosure after purchasing a home (Faber, 2013; Newman & Holupka, 2016). On average, medium-income Black Americans who purchased their first home in 2005 lost nearly $20,000 in net worth and equity by 2017, while medium-income White Americans accrued over $45,000 in wealth during the same two-year period (Newman & Holupka, 2016). Newman & Holupka (2016) found that between 2000 and 2010, Black Americans accrued more wealth as renters than homeowners. In the end, eight percent of Black Americans and Latinos who had purchased a home in 2005 lost it to foreclosure. Only 4.5% of White Americans lost their home to foreclosure during the same time. Several studies have identified home foreclosures as a primary factor driving the increased homelessness throughout the United States (Kingsley et al., 2009; Martin, 2010).

In 2010, at the height of the Great Recession, Los Angeles County recorded more than 35, 000 foreclosures. Black and Latino/a homeowners represented 12% and 13% percent of the county's total foreclosure rate between 2007 and 2012 (Ong et al., 2013). Further, foreclosure rates for Black and Latino/a homeowners were three times higher than for White households.

Again, the communities most disproportionately impacted were in the historically redlined, Precarious LA region. Local officials in Los Angeles draw direct parallels between the foreclosure crisis in Los Angeles County and the homeless crisis (Harris-Dawson, 2017).

Redlining and reverse redlining practices have had devastating impacts on Black and Latino/a families' efforts to utilize home ownership for wealth accumulation (Conley, 2010; Oliver & Shapiro, 2006). Not only did discriminatory housing practices prevent wealth accumulation, but their creation and enforcement also stripped Black and Latino/a families of the ability to return to the housing market. A foreclosure can drop a person's credit score 200 to 300 points (Zillow.com), which means that due to losing a home, someone's near-perfect credit score of 800 could fall to a poor credit score of 500. Since personal credit is essential for buying a home or renting an apartment, there is a high likelihood that Black American and Latino/a families who lost their home either ended up living in a shelter, doubling-up with another family, or even living on the streets.

Reverse redlining is a classic manifestation of structural racism because while individual loan officers may not have racist intentions when providing Black and Latinos subprime loans, the standard banking policies they utilize rely on previous, racially discriminatory practices and policies. Thus, when the advent of subprime loans is considered in relation to the history of racist housing policies and systematic disinvestment in Black and Latino/a communities, the role of loan officers in producing disparate outcomes along racial lines becomes clearer.

Renter Discrimination

Given the barriers to homeownership, many Black and Latino/a families find it necessary to rent their dwellings, however, they are often not well received in the rental housing market either. In 2012 the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development conducted a study

comparing the treatment of Black, Latino/a, and White renters with similar financial backgrounds. The report found that when Black Americans and Latinos inquired about the availability of housing units to an agent, they were more likely to be shown fewer properties and charged higher rent compared to equally qualified White renters. Table 18 highlights the proposed rent prices reported to Black and White renters in Los Angeles. The table shows that Black Americans were expected to pay between $199 and $425 dollars more than White renters before having the opportunity to move into an apartment. Furthermore, Black renters were four times more likely to be told that their move-in fees were required and non-negotiable. The discrepancy in pricing and stringent requirements enforced for Black American renters decreases their likelihood of being able to find an affordable apartment.

	White	**Black**	**Net Difference**
Los Angeles	$350	$617	$267
Source: Turner, Levy, Wissoker, Aranda, & Pitingolo (2013).			

Table 18. The Average Payments Required at Move-in for Equally Aualified Applicants by Race

Finding affordable housing in major cities is becoming increasingly difficult as historically low-income communities of color become gentrified. Gentrification is the process used to describe the return of the middle and affluent classes to cities that were previously occupied by low-income residents (Schlichtman et al., 2017). The increased demand among high-income individuals and families to live in cities such as Los Angeles has led to a dramatic change in the demographic composition of these cities. It has also produced dramatic increases in the cost of rental housing. Areas that were once redlined and served as one of the few places where impoverished and even middle-class Black Americans could find housing, are now experiencing a dramatic increase in the displacement of those people. Between 2000 and 2014

the median rent in Los Angeles increased by 28% while the median renter income declined by eight percent (LAHSA, 2017). The increase in rent is displacing many families from communities like Watts and Inglewood where long-term residents are now more vulnerable to evictions.

Eviction Disparities

Low-income people in cities are increasingly susceptible to eviction, yet Black women with children are the most likely victims. A 2012 study in Milwaukee found that Black American women comprised only 10% of the city's population; however, they represented 30% of all evictions (Desmond, 2014). In high-poverty Black American neighborhoods, men and women were evicted at a rate of 33:1 and 1:17, respectively. Conversely, in high-poverty White neighborhoods, the ratio is 134:1 for men and 150:1 for women (Desmond, 2016). High eviction rates among Black women are further heightened when they have children (Desmond et al., 2013).

When an individual attempts to secure an apartment after having been evicted, it is not uncommon for them to experience a form of double jeopardy. It becomes significantly more challenging to find housing after an eviction because eviction hearings are public and landlords often refuse to rent to people with a prior eviction (Desmond, 2013). Also, evictions are often used as a reason to disqualify families from receiving housing and home vouchers from the state and federal government (HUD, 2017). One in two homeless adults cite evictions or rental related problems as the cause of their homelessness (Lindblom, 1996). Meanwhile, evictions are the leading cause of extended periods of homelessness for adults with children (Burt, 2001). While move-in costs and evictions may seem like race-neutral processes, racial disparities are causing a

ripple effect that makes it more difficult for Black families to rent, thereby increasing the chances of Black youth becoming homeless.

Employment Discrimination and Income Disparities

Discrimination within the housing market has created significant barriers for Black families and impeded upon their ability to maintain stable housing. In addition to racial discrimination within an already expensive housing market, Black people also face employment discrimination and income disparities. Unemployment is one of the leading causes of homelessness within the United States, and one of the most pressing barriers for Black adults (U.S. Conference of Mayors, 2016). In 2018, Black adults had an unemployment rate of six percent—twice the unemployment rate of White adults (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019). A common misconception is that the high rate of unemployment among Black adults is solely the result of low qualifications for jobs, however, hiring discrimination is a major contributing factor.

Despite anti-discrimination laws established under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, discriminatory hiring practices continue to limit Black employment in the United States (Quillian et al., 2017). Between 1997 and 2017, more than 640,000 charges of racial discrimination in the workforce were filed to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. Quillian and colleagues (2017) conducted a meta-analysis of studies examining hiring discrimination against Black Americans between 1989 and 2015. Data for the study included 55,842 job applications and a total of 26,326 employment positions. Results showed that despite having identical resumes, White job applicants received 36% more callbacks than Black applicants. Contrary to the common narrative that discrimination is declining, Quillian et al., 2017 found that employment discrimination against Black applicants remains unchanged

since 1989. In fact, Black people are commonly filtered out of the job application process before ever receiving the opportunity to interview (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004; Pager et al., 2009; Quillian et al., 2017).

Pager, Western, & Sugie (2009) found that Black men were 60% less likely to receive a job interview or an informal meeting when going to a jobsite and asking to speak with a hiring manager for a low-wage job than White men with criminal records. Similarly, Gaddis (2015) found that when workers with college degrees attempted to apply for jobs, they were denied interviews based solely on presumed markers of Blackness on their resume (e.g., a common Black name or affiliation with a Black organization).

While the systematic denial of employment opportunities for Black workers has long been documented, regulating racial discrimination within the workforce is extremely challenging. Of the 640,000+ charges of racial discrimination filed in the workforce between 1997 and 2017, only two percent of cases were able to prove that racial discrimination played a role in non-hiring, firing, or harassment claims. As such, employers can continue to discriminate against Black workers with little to no consequence. The LAHSA Ad Hoc Report on Black People Experiencing Homelessness cited employment discrimination as a key burden for Black residents in Los Angeles County (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2018).

Even Black college graduates are at an economic disadvantage when it comes to employment. Gaddis (2015) found that when Black graduates from the most elite universities in the country applied to the same jobs as White graduates from less competitive universities, their White peers received more job interviews. When Black graduates from elite universities did receive interviews, they were for less prestigious positions with lower salaries. In Los Angeles County, about 15% of Black workers with advanced degrees still earn low wages.

Transportation

When discussing patterns in employment, consideration must be given to transportation systems and its influence on access to jobs. Due to its underdeveloped transit system and polycentric employment hubs, Los Angeles County is an “automobile-centric” region (Ong & González, 2019, p.113). Unlike cities with rich business districts like New York City and Chicago, Los Angeles has several smaller, specialized clusters of employment hubs typically located near affluent communities throughout the county (e.g., high tech developments in Santa Monica and a commercial services market in Beverly Hills). In LA county, “not having a car makes an Angeleno second class (Ong & Gonzalez, 2019, p. 118).” Unfortunately, Black and Latino/a residents and neighborhoods have the lowest vehicle rates in the county. Ong and González (2019) found that more than 15% of Black households did not own a vehicle, a rate 2.5 times higher than that of White households. When Black households did own a vehicle, it was a typically older model and potentially less reliable.

Disparate insurance premiums are a barrier to Black and Latino/a car ownership. For example, to own and drive a car in Los Angeles County, an individual must have car insurance. Ong and Stroll (2007) found that car insurance premiums map on to historically redlined communities such that when all factors are equal, residents in Black neighborhoods pay more for car insurance. When spending more than half of one’s income on housing, an additional monthly fee for car insurance can become a significant barrier.

The collection of discriminatory practices that Black workers and Black communities must navigate in the housing, banking, labor, and transportation systems increases the likelihood of income insecurity for Black families. The interaction between these institutions makes it more

challenging for Black families to pay for housing and thus puts Black families at higher risk for losing their dwellings. By extension, Black youth are increasingly vulnerable.

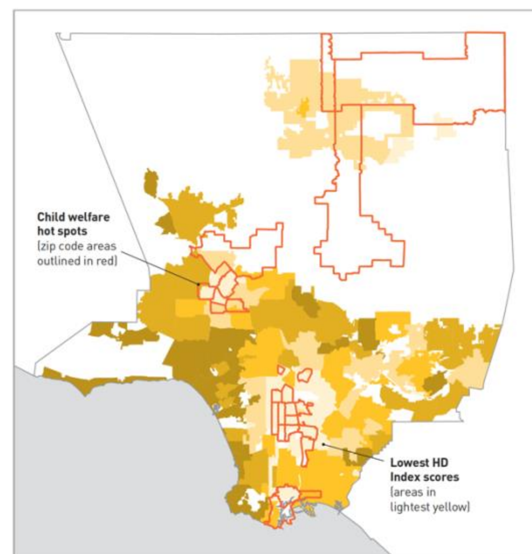
Racial Discrimination and the Foster Care System

The foster care system is another social institution that disproportionately affects Black youth and contributes to the structural racism that produces Black youth homelessness. Each year between 25,000 and 30,000 youth age out of foster care at 18 years old and no longer qualify to receive financial or housing support from foster care agencies (Courtney, Dworskey et. al, 2007; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009). Aged-out youth are forced to find and sustain independent housing at a time when most non-foster care youth are still living at home with their parents (Fields, 2003; Fry, 2013). As a result of this burden, one in six former foster care youth are unsuccessful at securing stable housing and experience homelessness by age 21, and one in three former foster youth experience homelessness by age 26 (Courtney et. al, 2007; Dworskey et al, 2013). Scholars point to low academic achievement, lack of access to gainful employment, limited social capital, and high incarceration rates as barriers that foster youth encounter once they age out of foster care (Courtney et. al, 2007; Dworskey et al, 2013: Reilly, 2003).

Research shows that Black children are more likely to age out of foster care as compared to White youth as White youth are both underrepresented in foster care and more likely to be adopted (Ards et al, 2012; Children's Bureau, 2016; Hill, 2006). Additionally, Black children are 1.6 times more likely to be placed in child protective services than White youth despite an unpronounced difference in actual experiences of domestic maltreatment (Sedlak & Broadhurst, 1996). Research shows that implicit and explicit biases in the child protective system affect decision-making about and outcomes for Black children (Dettlaff et al, 2011; Rivaux et al, 2008;

Hill, 2006). For example, Robert Hill (2006) found that Black families are more likely to be reported, investigated, and have claims of child neglect and/or abuse substantiated than families of other races. Ard and colleagues (2012) surveyed 459 caseworkers in Minnesota using visual vignettes that showed three images: (1) a messy bedroom, (2) a messy bedroom with a White baby sitting on the bed, and (3) a messy bedroom with a Black baby sitting on the bed. While the environment in each picture was the exact same, caseworkers were significantly more likely to regard the Black babysitting on the bed as an incident of child neglect. Ard and colleagues (2012) concluded that caseworkers had racially biased beliefs that led to more substantiated cases of maltreatment for Black youth.

Los Angeles County has more than 33,000 youth in the foster care system (Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services, 2021). Table 19 shows the overrepresentation of Black youth in foster care. The Black foster youth population is three times that of the general Black youth population in LA County. Map 5 shows regions in Los Angeles County with the highest referrals to child protective services. As with redlining practices and subprime loans, the regions with the highest number of referrals are located in the Precarious LA region and historically Black areas (Measure of America, 2018). Further, according to the 2017 Homeless Count, 16% of Black unsheltered families reported involvement with the foster care system compared to two percent of non-Black families.



Map 5. A Portrait of Los Angeles County Map Outlining Child Welfare Hot Spots

Racial/Ethnic Demographic	General Children Population*	Child Welfare Services Population	Disproportionality**
Asian	13%	2%	.15
White	20%	11%	.55
Native American	0.22%	.3%	1.4
Black	7%	24%	3.4
Latino/a	56%	58%	1
* Data retrieved from Kidsdata.org **An equal proportion ratio would equal 1. The smaller the disproportionality number, the more underrepresented the racial group is compared to the general county population. The larger the disproportionality number, the more overrepresented the racial group is compared to the general county population.			

Table 19. Los Angeles County Children Population by Race and Ethnicity Compared to Child Welfare Services Children Population by Race and Ethnicity

School Pushing Black Youth Experiencing Homelessness into Adult Homelessness

Like the foster care system, the criminal justice and education systems are also institutions contributing to Black homelessness (Morton et al., 2018). Youth without a high school diploma are 346% more likely to experience homelessness in adulthood than high school graduates. Additionally, half of men and a third of women experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County, report having been incarcerated prior to becoming homeless (Flaming et al., 2018). While schools cannot control the criminal justice system, they can impact the academic achievement of students experiencing homelessness and the discipline policies within schools that propel students into the school-to-prison pipeline. The remainder of this section analyzes student achievement and disciplinary data for LA County's student homeless population to explore disparities potentially pushing Black youth experiencing homelessness into adult

homelessness.

Data from the California Department of Education (CDE) serves as evidence that the McKinney-Vento policy is not effectively helping Black students experiencing homelessness graduate high school. According to the CDE, Black youth experiencing homelessness in Los Angeles County have a graduation rate of 60%—ten percentage points below the graduation rate for non-Black students experiencing homelessness and 20 percentage points below the county's average graduation rate for all students. Table 2 shows that Black youth experiencing homelessness comprise the largest percentage of youth who do not complete high school on time. Furthermore, Black youth who do not complete high school with their cohort are twice as likely to experience homelessness than their White peers. In the 2016-2017 school year, 70% of the Black students in LA County who did not finish high school with their cohort dropped out of school altogether.

School suspensions similarly track Black youth experiencing homelessness into adult homelessness. Extant literature documents Black students' alarmingly high suspension rate, its adverse effects on their achievement, and its association with early exposure to the criminal justice system (Gregory et al., 2010; Howard, 2013). School suspensions and expulsions alone nearly triple students' risk of having contact with the criminal justice system within a year from the initial date of suspension (Fabelo et al., 2011). Chart 1 illustrates school discipline data for students in Los Angeles County. Black students experiencing homelessness are more than twice as likely to be suspended than non-Black students in the homeless population and three times as likely than a non-Black student in the county. High suspension rates among Black students experiencing homelessness not only decrease their likelihood of graduating high school, but also increase their involvement with the criminal justice system throughout life.

Conclusion

This chapter utilized a structural racism lens to examine the cumulative effects of interactions between macro-level systems and institutions built upon legacies of racial discrimination, oppression, and deeply entrenched racial inequality on youth homelessness. Practices and policies that once permitted and perpetuated segregation and redlining continue to influence access to housing, employment, transportation, and education today. Adopting structural racism as an analytical frame for studying youth homelessness allows for more comprehensive understanding of race and space and the ways that structural inequities are codified in historically Black neighborhoods. Further, a structural racism analytic frame highlights the inter-connections between different social structures that perpetuate racial disparities in youth homelessness. The purpose of this chapter was to set a context for the results of this dissertation as the neighborhoods in which this study's students and school are located are the same as those that I highlighted via Measure of America (2018). The following chapter of this dissertation presents county level findings followed by youth and school district findings.

CHAPTER 5

LA COUNTY RESPONSE TO STUDENT HOMELESSNESS

Introduction

Homelessness has been a well-documented issue in Los Angeles County, California, for the past 40 years; however, in 2015, an acute awareness of the crisis of homelessness grew. The homeless crisis presented a policy window for addressing homelessness in the county. Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority identified more than 41,000 individuals experiencing homelessness through their annual point in time count in 2015, a 12-percent increase from 2013 (Holland & Karlamangla, 2015). City and county politicians, local philanthropists, and community organizers were able to successfully advocate for a county measure (Measure H) to address the ongoing crisis of homelessness in the County. Measure H proposed a 10-year, ¼ cent sales tax that would generate approximately $355 million a year in funding to prevent and combat homelessness across the county. The measure passed and the newly established county office, the Homeless Initiative, partnered with several organizations to develop a plan to "end homelessness." Through several policy summits with representation from more than 175 non-government organizations, cities, and county agencies, the Homeless Initiative designed a comprehensive plan that consisted of 47 different strategies. The 47 strategies fell into six broad buckets: Homeless Prevention, Subsidized Housing, Increased Income, Case Management Services, A Coordinated System, and an Increase in Affordable Housing. The Homeless Initiative distributed Measure H funding to support various strategies, and the resources were allocated to regional service providers-based geographical boundaries called Service Planning Areas (SPAs).

The process established what I refer to in this dissertation as the county's homeless response system. The homeless response system's lead county agencies were the Homeless Initiative Office, Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), and staff from the Department of Mental Health, the Department of Public Social Services, the Los Angeles County Development Authority, the Sheriff's Department, the Department of Probation, and the Department of Health Services. While the Homeless Initiative office coordinated the work and led the committees, the various departments and their non-profit subcontractors co-created the Homeless Initiative strategies that were ultimately approved by Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors.

In the past five years of implementation, the Homeless Initiative strategies have housed a record number of individuals and families in the county. However, data analysis from county documents and interviews with service providers, county and city officials, and school staff show that Measure H had limited impacts on schools and school districts attempting to support students experiencing homelessness. The following sections of this chapter discuss county level by theme.

Theme I: County homeless coordinators had limited resources to support school districts.

Under MVA, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) is responsible for supporting school district homeless liaisons. Participants in this study, however, stated that the department was severely underfunded and could not adequately support the number of school districts in its jurisdiction. One administrator at LACOE, Mary Taylor used the word "awful" to describe funding at the department homeless services office. As a LACOE administrator Mary works closely with the homeless coordinator. According to Mary, the homeless coordinator

position requires that considerable time be spent establishing partnerships with organizations to meet the needs of districts. Mary shared,

> Sarah has been really working hard on fostering relationships [with organizations] and then connecting people where she can. And, instead of [LACOE] getting stuff [like donated materials] in and giving it out, we just don't have, we don't have the funds for that. I mean, that grant [they] get is $250,000 a year. And that's, that's basically what that program runs on.

Mary emphasized that the Los Angeles County of Education Homeless Program operates on a budget of approximately $250,000 a year, which is only enough to fund one full-time homeless coordinator and an administrative assistant. The two staff members are responsible for providing technical support and tangible resources to 80 school districts, including 350 charter schools, serving more than 65,000 students experiencing homelessness. Mary shared that whenever Sarah, the homeless coordinator, received a non-monetary donation, she and her assistant spent significant time sorting through the donated items and trying to figure out how to disperse them to districts. She explained,

> [LACOE Homeless Service Program], like districts, do not get a lot of funding for the services that they provide, so they are very fortunate to have a connection with the company Office Bank.… [Office Bank] will provide, free backpacks, school supplies, some hygiene items, you know, diapers, wipes, that kind of stuff.… they'll donate those to [the program] so they can give them out to the districts. So that sounds great. I think there were like 70 pallets of stuff. Sarah is going in each day and me and different staff are coming in, but we're in this giant conference

room with all these pallets and we must figure out how we're gonna sort everything.

For the homeless service coordinator receiving donations was a gift and a curse—the donations were needed; however, her team's capacity was extremely limited which caused her to spend days sorting through materials to provide school districts, rather than directly supporting the homeless liaison and schools with technical assistance and advocacy. Additionally, the 70 pallets of supplies that were donated by Office Bank, was to be between divided between 80 school districts. While it was a significant donation, each school district ultimately only received one pallet.

As limited as it was, district homeless liaisons appreciated the support that LACOE provided. Liaisons discussed attending annual office MVA training sessions and applying for competitive small resource grants. However, LACOE did not have the resources or capacity to provide direct services to all its school districts. As such, it was unable to support families with housing assistance, homeless prevention resources, tutoring resources to students, or any other need that could not be resolved via a donation. Measure H allotted an additional $350 million tax dollars to address homeless in the county, however, the homeless coordinator at LACOE did not receive the necessary funds to fulfill the day-to-day responsibilities of her program.

Limited Measure H Funding for Student Homelessness

Despite schools representing a significant constituent of youth and families experiencing homelessness, school districts were not involved in the process of developing countywide strategies to end homelessness or the process for allocating Measure H funds to address homelessness in Los Angeles County. Of the 47 approved strategies, LACOE did not lead or co-lead any of the initiatives presented in the comprehensive plan. LACOE was only connected to

one strategy: E7 Regional Homelessness Advisory Council and Implementation Coordination. LACOE received $800,000 annually to hire eight regional youth coordinators whose responsibilities were to connect school homeless liaisons to the County's new Coordinated Entry System (CES) for receiving homeless services. Each regional coordinator was assigned to one Service Planning Area (SPA). LACOE subcontracted three coordinator positions to regional youth and family homeless service providers and five coordinators with the County's largest school district, Los Angeles Unified School District.

While the new positions under E7 have been helpful in promoting more extensive coordination for families and youth in the county to connect with district homelessness liaisons, funding limitations restrict school districts' ability to directly help families experiencing homelessness. Mary Taylor stated that funding under E7 is "not enough to pay the staff. It sounds like a lot of money, but not when you break it down into salaries, and then you add benefits." The CES coordinators stated that most of their resources were specifically for supporting individuals through the County's CES system, and they did not have additional resources for doubled-up families or youth experiencing homelessness.

According to MVA, CES regional coordinators were supposed to support all the school districts in their assigned SPA. However, the regional coordinators subcontracted through LAUSD often only had the capacity to work with LAUSD schools. The County's decision to divide regional coordinators equally across SPAs meant that some regional coordinators were serving communities with several school districts and more than 10,000 students experiencing homelessness, while others were servicing a few hundred homeless students. Table 20 provides a breakdown of the number of L.A. County school districts and students identified as experiencing homelessness in the 2018-19 school year. The table shows that SPA 3 served more

than 19,000 students experiencing homelessness across 24 more school districts than SPA 5; however, that SPA received the same number of CES regional coordinators.

SPA	Number of CES youth regional coordinators	Number of School Districts	Cumulative Student Enrollment in District Schools 2018-19	Percent of Total Number of SEH
1	1	10	3,983	6%
2	1	10	8,478	13%
3	1	29	19,718	30%
4	1	3	3,131	5%
5	1	4	566	1%
6	1	4	6,584	10%
7	1	15	12,309	19%
8	1	13	10,394	16%
Countywide			584	1%
Grand Total			65,747	100%

Table 20. Los Angeles County Service Planning Areas Disaggregate by School District and Students Experiencing Homelessness

Of the five school district liaisons interviewed, George Adan was the only liaison to mention his CES coordinator as an available resource. He described using the coordinator a total of three times over the past five years, “Natalie is our [CES] person, but she’s with LAUSD. I think I’ve been in contact with her maybe two or three times when a kid or a family with kids was trying to get back into school…but, again, the majority of the time, because they are LAUSD employees, they are focused in that area.” In the 2018-19 school year, more than 17,000 students identified as experiencing homelessness were enrolled in LAUSD. From George’s perspective, the CES

coordinator funded under E7 did not have the capacity to thoroughly support his school district. The County's homeless response system assigned CES regional coordinators to the LACOE homeless services programs; however, their job description and responsibilities were established by the program and did not meet the needs of the majority of the county's homeless student population.

Theme II: School districts were missing from the table.

Part of the disconnect between the regional homeless coordinator position and the needs of the LACOE homeless services program directly results from LACOE's absence from the homeless response systems planning and implementation process set forth by the County and Homeless Initiative. The Homeless Initiative (HI) conducted 18 homeless policy summits throughout a span of three months in 2015. The HI provided detailed policy and strategy briefs at each meeting, and the homeless response system would use the data presented and their respective expertise to help develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing homelessness in the county. While the Homeless Initiative established a comprehensive plan with a diverse group of partners, local school districts and the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE) were absent from the conversation. Table 21 disaggregates the organizations that attended policy summits into broad categories—cities, non-government agencies, government agencies, and county departments. The table shows that only one of 78 K-12 school districts participated in the policy sessions that shaped the County's plan for addressing homelessness.

Represented Stakeholders	Count of Organization Name
Cities	31
County of Los Angeles	25
Non-governmental agencies	110

Other government agencies	7
School districts	1
Grand Total	174

Table 21. Stakeholders Represented at the Homeless Initiative Policy Summits

In addition to a lack of school districts at the initial planning meetings, the Los Angeles County Office of Education was not a key partner in the development of the Homeless Initiative's plan to end homelessness. In the Chief Executive Officer of Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors letter to the Board presenting their homeless strategy plan, she concluded her letter introducing the HI strategies by thanking the County agencies "for their invaluable participation and contribution to the development of the recommended strategies." Twenty-five County agencies attended the policy summits. The agencies ranged from the Arts Commission to Animal Care Control and the Department of Children to Family Services, as well as the Sheriff's Department. The Los Angeles County of Education was not included in the CEO's letter nor was it on the participant list of summit attendees. The exclusion of LACOE and 79 school districts meant that there were virtually no education stakeholders representing the 70,000 students experiencing homelessness. The public K-12 school system was absent from the comprehensive plan for addressing homelessness.

Not only were education stakeholders absent from the homeless policy summit, the issue of students experiencing homelessness was missing as well. The Homeless Initiative collaborated with several County departments and content experts to prepare policy briefs for each of their summits. The goal of the policy briefs, as stated by HI was to "provide summit participants with information on key aspects of the issue, current local efforts, and best practices, as well as to provide initial ideas on potential recommended strategies to pursue" (Compilations of Policy

Briefs, 2015). HI preselected the first nine summit topics to frame the issues of homelessness. The second half of summit sessions focused on establishing the actual strategies to address homelessness. The preset summit policy briefs, and subsequent session topics, included discourse on issues like employment, Social Security Income and veteran benefits, homeless prevention strategies, and coordinated entry systems. K-12 students and schools were not explicitly discussed in the policy briefs (See Appendix I). Analysis of the initial nine policy briefs shows that the term "school" was only used four times and "education" was referenced a total of 14 times across nine different sessions. Further, when the terms were referenced, they were most often used to describe other County or community programs. For example, the employment policy brief discussed programs like "Jobs Corps," funded by the federal government, and "Independent Living Programs," run by the Department of Children and Family Services as programs that provided educational services, however, no educational institutions were mentioned in the policy briefs. Failure to make on-the-record mention of the stark number of students impacted by homelessness and the exclusion of district homeless educational programs and school programs made it very unlikely that the HI strategies and any associated funding would directly target students experiencing homelessness.

Theme II: Misaligned Goals for Addressing Homelessness

Several county officials cited misalignment of core goals and a lack of resources as chief reasons for why schools and school districts were absent from the county's homeless planning and implementation process. According to County officials the goal of Measure H is to get as many people off the streets and connected to services as possible. They viewed supporting students experiencing homelessness as a less urgent initiative. Sarah Dennis, a senior leader at LAHSA, stated that the housing crisis throughout the Los Angeles County put heavy public

pressure on cities and the county to get people off the street as fast as possible and to prioritize "ensuring individuals and families were not on the streets or in cars." Furthermore, the homeless initiative used the HUD definition of homelessness to define homelessness—a definition that excludes those temporarily staying in someone else's house. Since a reported 80% of the county's student homeless population is living with other families (doubled-up), County officials and homeless service providers cited lack of resources as a barrier to including school districts in their overarching plan to serve people experiencing homelessness. Luis White, a senior County leader at LAHSA, explained in the following quote that the Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority wanted to ensure their limited resources were going to the neediest families and thus did not include the MVA definition in their eligibility criteria:

> You know it's not that the goals were different, it's the resourcing you know. Some of it was based on just what resources can we apply on some level, like everybody would want to make sure that everybody had affordable housing…Can we be realistic about what solutions are available? If we [house families doubling up], we will not get to, you know, the kids who were sleeping in cars.

Despite receiving an influx of local funding, County officials leading the Measure H implementation process expressed what Luis described as a "scarcity of resources." Several County leaders expressed not having the capacity to support school districts due to the number of districts in the region. They also cited that public schools had their own federal funding through the MVA to handle the academic needs of students experiencing homelessness. From the LAHSA and HI participant perspective, if schools discovered a student or family experiencing homelessness as defined by HUD, their responsibility was to refer the student or family member to the homeless service delivery system for support. For example, when I asked, "What would

the ideal role of school districts be in helping address and mitigate the impacts of homelessness?" Vincent Telsa, an administrator at HI, responded:

> I would see the connection there that, um, like for example, all the school districts, it would be great if they know who their CES [coordinated entry system] provider is, that way they'll have that connection. Like if they had a homeless student, they would know how to connect that family to the right CES lead agency.

Vincent, like other county-level administrators, did not identify a significant role through which school districts could or should address homelessness. Moreover, they did not mention using school districts as sites for career advancement, family recruitment, or partnership for distributing homeless prevention dollars. Further, Vincent, like other participants, implied the HUD definition for students experiencing homelessness when suggesting that individuals connect to the County's coordinated entry system. The coordinated entry system was the L.A. County's centralized processing location for individuals who were experiencing homelessness based on the HUD definition. For families doubling-up, CES sites provided limited, if any, assistance.

The school district and county liaison participants agreed that their role was to provide students and families experiencing homelessness with academic resources and to refer them to other agencies for housing services. However, they also viewed their role as stabilizing youth and mitigating their chances of becoming homeless as adults. Martin Johnson, a LACOE administrator who worked with the County's homeless services office, expressed frustration at the limited collaboration he had with the broader homeless response system. In our interview, he stated,

> I have been super frustrated because my feeling about it is that education in the homeless world is hidden and is not particularly sexy. Education is not a microwave process… we've talked to HUD and LAHSA about this on several occasions, education is part of the sustainability for these families and these youth…they don't always want to hear from us. A lot of it is because of the McKinney piece.

Martin and other school-based homeless liaisons and advocates expressed feeling excluded from the homeless response system plan to end homelessness in Los Angeles County. Martin and other school homeless liaisons described their work as long-term investments into youth impacted by homelessness. However, school personnel at all levels were not part of framing the problem of homelessness in L.A. County and virtually all student homeless experts were absent from the table.

The Trickle-Down Approach from City to School Districts

Stakeholders within LAHSA and HI reported not having the capacity to support and engage individual schools and school districts; however, they recommended that cities design their own plans inclusive of their local school district(s). The Homeless Initiative provided planning and implementation funding to encourage cities to design a comprehensive homeless plan to address homelessness within their respective city. Less than half of the 88 cities in Los Angeles County, (41 cities) submitted a comprehensive city plan for addressing homelessness[6]. Like the County's homeless planning process, many city plans did not include local school districts. In fact, only 20 percent of cities in Los Angeles County reported their local school district as an active participant of the plan.

---

[6] Two cities created plans but did not apply for the funding and were not in Homeless Initiative City Planning Report.

Summary

Measure H has brought a significant amount of funding into Los Angeles County to address homelessness. However, both County and school district homeless liaisons were excluded from framing the county's problem of homelessness and the subsequent 47 strategies to address homelessness. Consequently, K-12 educational agencies only received 0.2% of Measure H annual funding, which resulted in the county having an extremely limited role in supporting school districts addressing student homelessness.

For example, the LACOE's homeless coordinator position was dedicated to supporting students experiencing homelessness. The County position was funded by the MVA federal grant; however, the funding did not provide the necessary resources to substantially support the numerous school districts within the County. While Measure H funding was being allocated, the funding was out of the reach of the county's office of education and local school districts.

Part of the reason K-12 school districts and the Los Angeles County Department of Education did not receive Measure H funding was because they did not participate in the County's strategy for addressing homelessness. According to participants, the County's mission for addressing homelessness did not align with the overall mission of school districts because they operated using two different definitions of homelessness. The Los Angeles County of Education and one large school district received County funding to address student homelessness. Their role was to support the remaining 87 school districts and 350 plus charter schools; however, their budget was limited, and they were unable to reach smaller districts. The County suggested that each city and regional service planning area create their own plan for addressing homelessness in their city. Analysis of the 44-city strategic homelessness plans shows

that several cities did not include a meaningful partnership with their school districts in their plan.

Last, the County funding was allocated via the county's service planning areas (SPAs). The County's decision to organize funding by regional SPAs clustered historically disadvantaged communities together and forced high needs communities with limited resources to utilize the same agencies for services.

CHAPTER 6

YOUTH INFORMAL NETWORKS

Introduction

This chapter uses 23 youth interviews to understand how students in Los Angeles County navigated the barriers of homelessness and successfully graduated high school. After conducting interviews with 23 youth impacted by homelessness in Los Angeles County, four major themes emerged. First, youth experiencing homelessness were able to establish their own networks of support to help them achieve academically. Second, youth often did not disclose their homeless experience to their school or school district because of both entities' overreliance on punitive institutions. Third, youth networks often spanned across neighborhoods and cities throughout Los Angeles County due to their need to access various resources. And fourth, most participants did not know about the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act (MVA) and did not receive critical services under this legislation. In this chapter, I discuss each of these themes fully.

Theme I: Establishing a Network of Support

All youth participants established their own network of support during high school that helped them graduate. In our interviews, participants highlighted individuals and agencies that I coded as being part of four different types of social networks: (1) familial network, (2) communal network, (3) educational network, and (4) governmental network. Table 28 provides a list of the network types, their various subgroups, and a participant quote that illustrates how the network was used. Each subgroup included individuals that provided tangible resources and capital which allowed youth to actualize success. Table 22 provides a frequency chart that shows how many youth discussed their various networks as resources to graduate. In the following section, I discuss how participants described each network type as being helpful in their pursuit

towards a high school diploma. Each section will focus on a few participant narratives that illustrate the network type being discussed.

Network Type	Network Subgroup	Part of Network	Not Mentioned in Network
Familial Network	Family	21	2
	Friend	8	15
	Familial Network %	**100%**	**0%**
Communal Network	Church	4	20
	Youth Development Organization	4	19
	Local Employment	6	17
	Communal Network %	**39%**	**61%**
Educational Network	Individual School Staff	9	14
	School District Homeless Liaison	8	15
	Sports Coach	6	17
	Educational Network %	**57%**	**43%**
Governmental Network	City or County Agency	18	5
	Homeless Shelter/Outreach Center	14	9
	Governmental Network %	**78%**	**22%**

Table 22: Youth Network Type Summary and Frequency Chart

Familial Network

All participants in the study described support from family or close friends as a critical factor that influenced their high school experience. Family members often fed and opened their homes to participants. In addition to providing basic needs, family members helped youth either remain enrolled at their current school when they experienced homelessness or helped them enroll in a better school district that fit their needs. Close friends (and their families) provided similar support to youth participants. In the study, participants discussed friends offering food,

shelter, and introducing youth to new academic opportunities. In this section, I highlight how family members helped youth secure more desirable school placements, and how friends introduced youth to academic opportunities.

Family Members Helping with School Placement

Five participants discussed family members helping them academically by supporting the students either staying in their current school or helping them enroll in a better school district. This was the case for Robert. When interviewed, Robert was a community college graduate working toward his bachelor's degree at one of California's top universities. He aspired to build a career helping students from under-resourced schools gain access to higher education—an opportunity he felt he had to discover largely on his own and without the help of his high school. While he did not particularly appreciate his overall experience in high school, he did acknowledge that switching high schools while he was experiencing homeless was helpful.

When Robert was in ninth grade, his family was evicted from their apartment in Richstead and doubled-up with his grandmother in a neighboring city. While he described the experience of having to leave his friends and neighborhood in Richstead challenging, he saw attending a new, better-quality school as a silver lining. Robert's mom transferred Robert from a low-performing charter school in Richstead to a better-resourced school in the more affluent community of Canton a few miles away. Robert recalled,

> [My mom] ended up letting me go to Canton High, because it was closer to my grandma house, it was Canton instead of Richstead and she just thought it was better. So that was the only school I could convince her to go to. So I went to Canton High and we were living with my Grandma, so I guess it worked out.

Having to double-up brought a host of problems for Robert and his family, but switching schools significantly increased his likelihood of graduating. For example, Robert's original high school cohort graduation rate was 52%; however, his new school's graduation rate was 80%[7]. Though Robert would move twice more during school high school, he stayed at Canton high school. Robert stated:

> In high school I had my grandma address the whole time. Even when I moved in with my uncle, I kept my grandma's address because I still stayed at Carson High. So I never had to change my address. I never had to put my auntie address on anything, and I never had to put my uncle address on anything. Even after we moved out, I would just go over there and get my mail and stuff like that.

While Robert only stayed with his grandmother for his 10th grade year, her willingness to allow him to continue using her address while he doubled-up with other family members provided him academic stability while attending a relatively high performing school. Several youth discussed using their familiar network in helping them secure attending their most desirable school.

Friends Introducing New Opportunities

Familiar network extended beyond relatives and included friends. While participants stated that they did not disclose their homeless experience to the majority of their peers, most participants stated that a close friend supported them during their homeless experience. In addition to providing participants with a place to sleep, the participants mentioned that some of their friends also introduced them to educational opportunities. For example, though Robert left his old neighborhood and school, he remained friends with his former neighbors in Richstead. He

[7] Both high school cohort graduation data for 2012-13 school year was retrieved from California Department of Education DataQuest website.

was introduced to community college via his close friend Diamond. In our interview, Robert explained that he never considered postsecondary possibilities until his senior year after learning about community college. Robert explained how he learned about community college through his friend Diamond:

> One summer she [Diamond] was taking a class at [Community College X]. I didn't even know what [Community College X] was but I just drove up there with her one day. And I think I stayed in her car while she had class or something like that. She was telling me how she was taking some summer classes and stuff like that . . . I went up there with her and that is how I learned about [Community College X]. I still didn't have community college in my head, but I knew there was a school you could go to without applying or going through that whole [college] process.

Diamond not only introduced Robert to community college but also encouraged him to enroll in community college courses during the summer leading up to his senior year in high school. While Robert was not completely sold on attending community college after high school, he admitted that Diamond helped him realize community college was a viable option. After graduating high school, Robert attended Community College X. Diamond is an example of a near peer operating in Robert's network who was providing aspirational capital and tangible resources. When Robert disclosed to Diamond, they both were living in poverty and struggling with poverty related challenges; she used the little capital she had to help him. Seven other participants provided similar experiences where friends shared their resources (housing, food, and knowledge) to help youth in the study.

Communal Network

Youth also tapped into their communal network to receive resources and supports necessary for them to focus on school. I defined communal network as local, non-government institutions found in a youth's community that provide them with useful resources. Nine youth in this study discussed church, youth development organizations, non-profit organizations and for-profit entities as critical communal networks. Youth Development organizations provided navigational capital, aspirational capital, and sometimes income. Local jobs provided youth with much needed money to address some of their basic needs. Further, churches provided youth with aspiration capital and resources to resolve their basic needs. This section illustrates one experience of a communal network through Kevin's story.

Youth Development Organizations

When interviewed, Kevin was a third-year college student with aspirations of becoming a lawyer. In his interview, Kevin shared that he was thrust into homelessness at 14 years old after being physically abused and kicked out of his father's house at the same time his mother was being evicted from her one-bedroom apartment in the city of Wade. Kevin, his three brothers, his mother, his mother's girlfriend, and his mother's girlfriend's daughter were all forced to live in a one-bed motel room for most of his freshman and part of his sophomore year in high school. Kevin shared that a new youth development organization, the Black Male Youth Academy (BMYA), kept him engaged in school during and after his homeless experience. BMYA was a youth development program in South Los Angeles that taught college readiness classes in local high schools and ran out-of-school programing for Black young men. The executive director Mr. Davidson, provided Kevin with aspirational capital by helping him believe that he could make it to college; Mr. Davidson backed up that aspirational capital with tangible supports. The quote

below describes the first time Mr. Davidson taught Kevin about financial aid and his ability to attend college:

> The executive director, Mr. Davidson was in there preaching to us about college and going to college. And at the time I didn't see myself going to college because it's like well I mean I'm homeless, college is not my option unless I do it through sports because academically I wouldn't be able to do it…[Mr. Davidson] was talking about financial-aid, I didn't know what that was. I didn't know what a FAFSA fee waiver was. I didn't know what a college application was. Or any of those things. And so I'm really listening to what he's saying… I really grasped to that idea, and I told him. I was like 'thank you', I appreciate you talking to us about going to college and how we can get there through academics.

Mr. Davidson acted as a bridge and served as a teacher and non-profit program director. He provided Kevin with both aspirational capital and navigational capital. Mr. Davidson was the first person who made Kevin feel like he could attend college on an academic scholarship and Mr. Davidson provided a roadmap (navigational capital) for how Kevin could get there—become a collegiate scholarship recipient. Kevin described Mr. Davidson as a "mentor" and his "support system" during high school and beyond. Mr. Davidson checked in on Kevin's grades in his other classes, supported Kevin in his college application process, and advocated for Kevin once he attended.

While Kevin started our interview talking about Mr. Davidson, he expanded the conversation to discuss other staff members in BMYA. Before ending our conversation on people and organizations that impacted his ability to graduate high school, he added BMYA staff members Kendrick Marcy and Dimtri Camilo as two other influential figures who saw him

"grow up and evolve." Several other youth shared similar experiences of learning about college and becoming motivated to graduate high school in order to gain college admittance as a result of support, encouragement, and information from staff at a community-based organization.

Local Jobs

Another critical community resource that some participants discussed was having employment. While several participants discussed needing a job, few were able to obtain one. For example, Alina (who I discuss more thoroughly later) was actively looking for a job—to no avail—when she was living on the streets while in high school. She recalled:

> People working in the Missions [homeless shelter] would come out, and I would ask "Do you have any job opportunities?" They be like, "We had some flyers, but I can't really find them but here is a dollar." I don't need a dollar. I need a job opportunity. Something that will give me money to get there.

As a teenager, finding a job was challenging. This was and continues to be especially true for the areas where participants lived. As discussed in Chapter 4, most of the participants lived in communities with high unemployment rates and high disconnected youth rates. Despite the challenge, a few participants were able find employment.

Kevin's employment came directly from the community-based organization BMYA. BMYA created a monthly stipend program for youth and provided Kevin with a position once they found out he was experiencing homelessness. In the interview excerpt below, Kevin shares that receiving the BMYA stipend kept him in school and away from illegal activities.

> [The homeless experience] was very strenuous on me, my brothers, but as well as my mom. So I kinda had this thing where I thought about dropping out of

> school and trying to provide for my family by either joining a gang or just becoming a drug dealer or robbing, selling people. Just because I didn't wanna see my mom cry no more. I didn't wanna see her hurt. I didn't want to see my brothers hurt, but that's when I stumbled upon this program. The Black Male Youth Academy….so I managed to get a stipend from [Mr. Davidson] to where I was able to help with my living situation. So I didn't have to worry about crying for food or if we was gonna have money.

Kevin reported that he earned a $150 monthly stipend for being a youth leader in BMYA for three years. The consistent stipend allowed Kevin to contribute to family bills while staying connected to school. Having BMYA, not only as an organization providing him with mentorship but also with employment, proved to be a critical resource for Kevin to stay in school and pursue college. It is important to note that BMYA was a new community-based organization when Kevin participated that was not designed to specifically target students experiencing homelessness but rather to support young men who lived in the Wade community. Also, Mr. Davidson did not earn a salary through the program. In fact, according to the organization’s 2010 financial statements, providing Kevin an $150 monthly stipend equated to a significant percentage of the organization’s total operational budget. His consistent and multi-pronged generosity demonstrates a similar phenomenon of community members leveraging their limited resources to help youth experiencing homelessness.

Churches

For five participants, churches were an important community resource and communal network. Participants discussed church providing them temporary housing, food, clothing, and aspiration capital. For Kevin, his church community contributed to all four needs. Immediately

after falling into homelessness, Kevin's mom made it a point to get Kevin and his two brothers involved in church. When I asked Kevin what kept him grounded while experiencing homelessness and navigating high school, he responded,

> What I used as motivation was church. I was in church heavy. I was reading my bible. Me and my brothers were reading our bible. So that was one of the motivations I had…[I knew] my current situation was not my final destination, which was a message our pastor had preached about back then.

In 10th grade, his pastor's sermons provided Kevin with the inspiration to move forward and focus on graduating high school. In addition to providing encouraging sermons, his church community also told Kevin's mother about a housing complex being built a couple cities over. Kevin shared:

> My mom was able to get information from one of our church members on this housing program that was just now starting up on the east side of Lincoln. Where we were eligible to qualify for it. We wind up getting in this place where we had a four-bedroom apartment…church members were helping my mom out with rent as well as money for food.

Kevin's church community directly supported his family becoming permanently housed. While Kevin's mom had a Section 8 voucher, finding housing with a voucher in Los Angeles County is very challenging. Moreover, coming up with first and last month's rent, along with a security deposit requires a significant amount of upfront cost—a cost subsidized by his church. While Kevin moved to Lincoln, he continued to attend school and church in Wade. He and his brother would walk two hours to Wade High School because of the network they established there, and

they did not want to transfer to another school.

Educational Network

Half of the participants in the study described benefiting from support from their educational network. Youth reported that people in their educational network provided them with a wide range of resources from academic tutoring and instruction to the full range of services legally required under MVA. Some students and families notified their district homeless liaison and received formal support from their school district, while others leaned on individual school staff and sport coaches to provide resources, such as tutoring, mentoring, food, and clothing, to alleviate some of the student's unmet needs. In this section, I share Marcus's high school journey to illustrate how youth's educational network can support their ability to stay in school and graduate despite experiencing homelessness.

Homeless Liaison

As discussed in the Chapter 2, the school district homeless liaison is one of the key individuals supporting students experiencing homelessness. The liaison can formally designate a student as meeting MVA's definition of homelessness and provide students with the all the resources the district has available. While most students in the study did not have the homeless liaison in their education network, Marcus was one of the few who did. When I first interviewed Marcus, he was a second year college student at one of the country's elite universities with aspirations of pursuing a doctorate degree in sociology to study the impact of poverty on youth. Growing up, Marcus had several episodes of homelessness—living in RVs, cars, motels, and living with family members in three different states. Marcus's mother was able to secure a Section 8 housing voucher when she lived in Arizona and decided to use her voucher in Los Angeles County. She moved him and his four siblings to Los Angeles County after having a

conditional lease agreement; however, Marcus recalled the landlord later reneging on the offer, because the Los Angeles County Housing Authority had taken too long to process her voucher. After staying in motels and their car for a few weeks, Marcus and his family were able to be placed in a Valley City family transitional shelter. Arriving to Los Angeles County, Marcus enrolled in an online high school. However, the shelter required children to attend a "brick and mortar" school and immediately connected Marcus's mom to Valley District's homeless liaison. Marcus explained:

> So [the transitional shelter] put us in regular school. In the meantime, we got a resource from Valley Unified School District and there is a woman. Her name is (pause, thinking) I forgot her name. Dang. She helped us so much and she continues to help us. She signed my mom up for these Christmas presents. It is the Families in Transitional through VUSD. And this woman, I forget her title but she really looks out for a bunch of families. Like when during Thanksgiving, if you don't have a turkey, they have this event and you can sit outside with bunch of other families that are struggling or who don't have a lot and you can. She would really look out for our family.

The person Marcus described in the excerpt was the district homeless liaison; she immediately helped Marcus and five siblings enroll in school and connected Marcus's family with MVA resources. For example, in addition to providing food, the liaison supported his family with transportation to and from school. Marcus shared that the liaison would provide his family a "monthly stipend of tokens for [him] to take the bus or for [his] mom to take the bus." For Marcus, the homeless liaison support became part of his foundational educational network.

Individual School Staff

In addition to utilizing the formal support of a homeless liaison, participants also leveraged teachers, administrators, and auxiliary staff as a resource. Nine participants highlighted school staff members who were disconnected from their school's formal homeless support network as critical support systems to graduate high school. In Marcus's case, individual teachers provided him aspirational capital and academic support that he attributed to helping him graduate high school.

Centered in Marcus's in-school support system were his teachers Mr. Chatterjee and Mr. Russell. Marcus credited his ability to excel and graduate high school because of the academic support and mentorship from a handful of teachers—one of those teachers was his tenth grade algebra teacher Mr. Chatterjee who provided Marcus with rigorous instruction class and tutoring in math. Marcus explained:

> I came in below basic levels in math, but Mr. Chatterjee did a good job of being very interactive. He had group projects—for a math teacher, I think he did the best job you could do to make math engaging and to make sure you actually learn…He invested in me. I went in his classroom a lot during lunch for tutoring and just to talk to him. So we ended up getting close. So I feel like, Mr. Chatterjee really made a difference when it came to math for me

According to Marcus, Mr. Chatterjee allowed him to come to his classroom during lunch for tutoring and to have informal conversations; their informal conversations led to them building a relationship in which Marcus felt comfortable disclosing his housing status. While caring and informal conversations led to Marcus sharing his life experiences, it also allowed the then tenth grader the opportunity to receive additional tutoring in his algebra course. Researchers have

identified Algebra I as a gatekeeper course for high school graduation (Ma & Wilkins, 2007). Students who are required to repeat Alegra I have increased odds of not graduating high school within four years. By building a relationship with Marcus and providing him academic support outside of class, Mr. Chatterjee helped him excel in a course that prevents many youth from graduating high school.

Marcus also attributed his success to Mr. Russell pushing him academically and providing him with mentorship:

> Mr. Russell class. I appreciate all teachers the same and I respect all the teachers the same, but I feel like he had the biggest intellectual impact on me and like he still sets the best example… I saw a lot of like, not only myself in him, but also like, what I could become based off the example that he sets. So like, even now he is at the PhD program at UCLA like getting his doctorate and that's something that I want to do…I'm not too worried about modeling myself after him and I'm not too worried about going to him [for guidance] because I know that he understand where I am coming from and I could see myself in his experiences.

Mr. Russell was Marcus's history and economics teacher during the end of his episode of homelessness. Mr. Russell challenged Marcus in class, but more importantly, acted as a mentor and role model. He provided Marcus with both aspirational and navigational capital to not only finish high school but to also attend college. Judging by Marcus's goal of obtaining his doctorate, Mr. Russell's roadmap was still serving him.

Sports Coaches

Six participants highlighted sport coaches or team sports as important people and spaces for supporting their ability to stay in school and graduate. For some students, just meeting the

basic requirements to remain on a sports team gave them additional motivation to stay engaged in school. For Marcus, his basketball coaches provided him with social-emotional support, food, and clothing. They also covered his basketball expenses.

As a freshman in high school, Marcus was very quiet and struggled to socialize at Valley High. Not only was he self-conscious about living in a family shelter, he was also experiencing a culture shock after being uprooted from Arizona to Los Angeles County. Basketball was the only interest that kept him social and he attributed playing on Valley's basketball team as the key tool for becoming acclimated in school. While joining the basketball team is free, families are often responsible for paying for the basketball warm-up uniforms, out of network tournaments, and food during away games. The additional expenses associated with playing high school basketball presented a barrier for Marcus staying on the team. However, Marcus shared his homeless status with his junior varsity coach and he decided to cover the student's expenses. Marcus stated:

> Coach James is another person that learned about my situation early. Especially since I couldn't pay for anything during basketball. He paid a lot of it for me. I told him my situation. I told him how many brothers and sisters I had. I told him that I was homeless and I didn't have money for it. I would open be like, 'Yo, I don't have money for it. Is there anyway around it?' Because I was willing to work for things.

Marcus later explained that Coach James appreciated how hard he worked at basketball and his strong grades and wanted to help him. Coach James eventually shared details of Marcus's situation with the other coaches, and they all chipped in to help when they could. Even after Marcus secured permanent housing, his coaches remain a significant resource for Marcus. For example, his varsity coach donated clothes to Marcus his junior year and provided Marcus with

his first pair of designer sneakers—Air Jordan. While his basketball coaches did not provide Marcus with direct academic support, they allowed Marcus to participate in an extracurricular activity that kept him engaged in school.

Governmental Network

A large majority of youth participants discussed their families utilizing government assistance as a significant stabilizing factor while they experienced homelessness. Participants mentioned government subsidies such as Cal Fresh, Section 8 housing vouchers, or County- and City-funded homeless shelters as critical programs that helped cover some of the youth's basic needs. In this section, I describe how youth utilized government agencies as part of their networks of support through the experiences of Lisa, Rashad, and Terrel.

City or County Agency Support

Seventeen of the 23 students interviewed discussed receiving services from City- or County-funded agencies. For most youth, they recalled their mother receiving government resources to pay for food or to subsidize housing. Lisa, however, sought these resources out herself when she was a senior in high school.

When I met Lisa, she was a freshman in college with aspirations of becoming a registered nurse. She was also entering her second year of homelessness. Lisa grew up on the border of Richstead and attended high school in the city's public school district. Her and her five siblings were raised by her grandparents and grew up living in their house. Unfortunately, Lisa's grandmother passed away when she was nine and in her senior year of high school her grandfather became ill. He entered the hospital in April 2019 at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and stayed in hospital for two months before passing away. Lisa shared that her family could not visit his bedside or communicate with him directly (due to COVID-19

restrictions). The family's lack of communication with her father led to them being unable to access his bank account to continue paying the mortgage on their house—their home was foreclosed. Losing her grandfather during her senior year of high school not only made Lisa homeless but also an orphan.

Though she stayed in a foreclosed house during her homeless experience, over the course of months, the utilities started to get turned off. Lisa turned 18 during her senior year, and fortunately, she had the navigational capital to apply for food assistance. In her interview Lisa shared that she used Los Angeles County's food assistance program, CalFresh, to feed her and her family members that were still staying in the house. When I asked how she knew about the service, she responded, "I got connected to CalFresh because of County buildings down the street. I walked my butt to the County building. I took my information and I signed up." I tried to rephrase my question to find how she learned about the subsidy and she just laughed and said, "You just know once you 18, you can apply for some food stamps." For Lisa, knowing the qualifications for food stamps was common knowledge and her proximity to the resource made it an easier one to obtain.

Homeless Shelters and Outreach Centers

The most common county resource discussed by youth participants in the study came from homeless shelters and outreach centers that subcontracted with the County. Twelve participants used outreach centers and homeless shelters for temporary housing, mentoring, and navigational capital. For example, Rashad and his brother Terrel directly contribute their return to school to their experience living in a youth transitional housing program called The Bridge. They became homeless during Rashad's sophomore and Terrel's junior year of high school after their mom was evicted from their apartment in Pacifica. During this same period, an outside

party reported their mother for child neglect. The combination of being doubling-up with family members, living in motels, and the stress of seeing their mother having to go to court caused both Rashad and Terrel to stop attending school altogether. Rashad stated that before entering The Bridge program, "It was just too much moving around. I couldn't really stay focus. By the time I was able to think, the day was over. I was tired and I would just sleep." The Bridge program reconnected the brothers back to school, connected them to MVA services, and provided them with a stable place to live. The program also had life coaches that were helping them create plans for graduating high school in the upcoming school year and moving into their own apartment. Terrel described The Bridge's programing as "connecting them to the next step in their life, so that they can have their own home." For both Terrel and Rashad transitional housing program provided them navigational capital, housing, and stability—those resources are helping both brothers obtain their high school diploma.

Theme I Summary

Through analyzing the narratives of youth impacted by homelessness, it became evident that their ability to graduate high school, or be on track to graduate high school, involved leveraging capital from several different networks. Each participant gained critical resources from a combination of familial, communal, educational, and governmental networks they established. The accumulative capital from their different networks provided enough critical and accessible resources to complete school. However, it is important to note that only eight participants in the study utilized the formal resources that are provided under MVA and the majority of the participants had academic, transportation, and counseling needs that should have been filled by MVA. In the following section, I discuss why participants opted out of formally disclosing their homeless status to their school district.

Theme II: Youth Opting Out of Formal School Support

Despite not having any questions in my interview protocol about child protective services (CPS) or the criminal justice system (CJS), both agencies were mentioned often by participants. Twenty-one of the 23 students attended a school in a "child protective services hotspot" according to Measure of America's Portrait of Los Angele County (Lewis & Burd-Sharps, 2018). Table 23 shows how many participants discussed CPS and CJS during their interviews; CPS or CJS were mentioned by 11 of the 23 youth interviewed. Furthermore, more than half of the Black youth interviewed discussed the two punitive institutions. Often, CPS and CJS were discussed as deterrents for youth—particularly Black youth—to disclose their homeless status to their school and school district. For many youth in the study, non-disclosure meant excluding formal school homeless services from their in school networks and not receiving MVA services. This findings section provides both Alina and Elizabeth's experiences to illustrate youth participants' rationale for not formally including their school into their education network.

Racial-Ethnic Group	Participants that Mentioned CPS or CJS	Total Number of Interviews	Percentage of CPS and CJS Mentions
Black	9	15	60%
White	1	1	100%
Latino	1	7	14%
Total	11	23	43%

Table 23: Number of Participants that Mentioned Child Protective Services or Criminal Justice System in Interview by Race and Ethnicity

Child Protective Services

For Alina, once her counselor told her that if a child is experiencing homelessness, the counseling office immediately calls protective services, she decided to opt out of disclosing her homeless status. When I interviewed Alina, she was currently working as a homeless outreach

coordinator. She spent her sophomore year living in a motel with her mother, mother's boyfriend, and two younger brothers. While living in a motel was a challenge, the situation worsened her junior year when her mother took her two younger brothers and abruptly left Alina behind and moved to Las Vegas to escape domestic violence. Immediately after her mom left, Alina went to her school guidance counselor to inquire about receiving help. The counselor's default response to address a student's housing insecurity was to call child protective services—a response that deterred Alina from disclosing her homeless status. She recalled,

> I had talked to my counselor about it. I was like, 'If someone is homeless, what do you guys do?' Without saying, I was the one homeless. And she said, 'Oh, we would have to contact, foster-care people again.'

Alina wanted support, but she feared CPS would separate her family and get her mother in trouble. So instead of asking for help from her school, she established her own network. For her last two years of high school, Alina was an unaccompanied minor toggling between sleeping in tents, youth shelters, and a friend's closet. Alina did not have family in Los Angeles and did not have individual school staff or coaches she felt comfortable disclosing her living situation to for support. She relied heavily on the governmental network she was able to establish but wished she had support and guidance from her high school. When reflecting on what would have made her experience easier, she stated school staff, "who would speak up for you and who really understood that a personal bond between them and their student is very important." Alina's emphasis on wanting to tell school staff is a critical point because it makes clear that the school's overreliance on CPS was the barrier causing Alina not to disclose.

Criminal Justice System

Elizabeth also opted out of utilizing formal school support due to the school administrators and staff's overreliance on Child Protective Services. However, her narrative also included mention of her school's overreliance on the criminal justice system. Elizabeth was a recent high school graduate with ambitions of starting her own cosmetic line. During middle and high school, Elizabeth constantly moved between family apartments. She and her mother doubled-up with an aunt who lived on the affluent westside of Lincoln during Elizabeth's middle school years; however, during high school, Elizabeth's mother moved into a one-bedroom apartment in the less affluent southside of the city. Elizabeth did not feel comfortable staying in a one-bedroom apartment with her mother and her mother's boyfriend, so she began to couch-surf between various aunts' and friends' houses while in high school.

Elizabeth revealed in our interview that she really needed counseling services and conflict mediation between her and her mother—services that are offered under MVA. However, she perceived that telling her school about her arguments with her mother and her couch-surfing would lead to a CPS investigation and police involvement:

> [Teachers] want to get the police involved or they wanna call CPS [child protective services]…they bring the wrong attention. That's not the attention I need. This is a different cry for help pretty much…Like it's not no physical abuse going on. It's not no mental abuse or nothing like that. It could just be something that someone said that you just don't want to go home and it's not that serious, but like sometimes it can cause mental trauma, but like at the same time, I don't think it's that serious for us to have to call CPS and my mom have to go to jail behind it.

In her explanation, Elizabeth tethered CPS investigation with police involvement. She also made it clear that verbal altercations with her mom caused her to run away resulting in her to needing counseling services and family mediation not than CPS or CJS interventions. Similar to Alina experience, Elizabeth's fear of CPS was not unsubstantiated, several teachers threatened to call CPS as a punitive practice. Elizabeth recalled hearing teachers saying things like, "Why you acting like this? Okay. Well, I should have been called CPS." Teacher messages and her overall awareness of how schools, CPS, CJS working together deterred her from seeking formal school support.

Theme II Summary

Many participants, particularly Black youth, actively opted out of sharing their homeless experiences with school personnel due to their school's overreliance on the criminal justice system and child protective services. Alina's and Elizabeth's narratives illustrate that school staff reinforced the connection between CPS and CJS. Youth's decision to avoid formal school support came at the cost of not receiving services federally mandated services.

Theme III: Youth support networks extended beyond their local district.

Most of the youth interviewed had to leave their local community and service planning area to receive the resources they needed while experiencing homeless. Table 24 provides a list of all youth in the study and indicates which youth left their local school district area to receive critical resources while they were experiencing homelessness. Table 24 shows that most participants who lived in neighborhoods clustered by A Portrait of Los Angeles County as Main Street LA, Struggling LA, or Precarious LA were required to extend beyond their local neighborhood for resources. All the participants who attended schools in the Elite Enclaves did not report leaving their community for additional resources. There were two outlier participants,

Dayon and Kevin, who lived in Precarious LA but did not report leaving to obtain critical services. In this section, I share Destiny's experience to describe how youth travel across neighborhoods to receive the necessary services to navigate school while homeless. I then highlight Dayon's experience as one of the few outliers living in a Precarious LA neighborhood and did not leave his community to receive resources to graduate. I end the section by sharing portions of Alicia's experience residing in an affluent community that met her diverse needs.

	District HDI Score	The Five LA Counties Clusters	Did youth mention using services across school district, city, or SPA lines?	Resources Obtained out of their Neighborhood
Robert	5	Main Street LA	Yes	Schooling
Alina	4	Struggling LA	Yes	Shelter Services
Marcus	7	Elite Enclave LA	No	N/A
Kevin	4	Struggling LA	No	N/A
Jamelle	7	Elite Enclave LA	No	N/A
Dayon	2	Precarious LA	Yes	N/A
Elizabeth	2	Precarious LA	Yes	Schooling
Jeffrey	2	Precarious LA	Yes	Schooling, Housing
Helen	4	Struggling LA	Yes	Housing
Cynthia	3	Struggling LA	Yes	Housing
Nikki	2	Precarious LA	Yes	Shelter Services
Lisa	3	Struggling LA	Yes	Schooling
Destiny	2	Precarious LA	Yes	Schooling, Shelter Services
Maya	3	Struggling LA	Yes	Shelter Services
Jason	5	Main Street LA	Yes	Shelter Services
Joseph	5	Main Street LA	Yes	Shelter Services
Yasmin	3	Struggling LA	Yes	Shelter Services
Natasha	4	Struggling LA	Yes	Shelter Services
Amelia	3	Struggling LA	Yes	Shelter Services
Eva	3	Struggling LA	Yes	Shelter Services
Terrel	4	Struggling LA	Yes	Shelter Services, Housing
Rashad	4	Struggling LA	Yes	Shelter Services, Housing
Alicia	8	Elite Enclave LA	No	N/A

Table 24: Summary of Where Youth Participants Received Services

SPA-hopping for Resources

Eighteen participants in lower resourced communities were required to gain some of their resources outside of their local school district or service planning area—a phenomenon that Destiny called SPA-hopping. Destiny is a current youth homeless policy advocate in Los Angeles County who experienced several years of homelessness in high school. In both her experience as a youth and a service provider, she saw individuals from neighborhoods in Precarious LA travel to areas near Elite Enclaves to receive resources. Destiny worked at a drop-in center for transitional aged youth called The Hub in an affluent neighborhood in Lincoln. During our interview, she compared The Hub to programs in South Lincoln:

> [The Hub] got a lot of kids from South Lincoln because South Lincoln (pause) the resources for youth are not like the resources here in North Lincoln, Like South Lincoln you Helping Hand, but Helping Hand wasn't as helpful… once I knew the youth wanted to continue school, then I would do a warm hand off to that department. But they always took care of them. They help them and get them connected with different financial aid, different resources, just to make it less burdensome.

While several participants in the study utilized Helping Hand, the organization's resources were limited compared to The Hub's and several other homeless services agencies in Elite Enclaves when it came to providing wraparound services for youth. Destiny and Alina both traveled to North Lincoln to utilize their drop-in services or temporary shelter.

Youth also reported SPA or city hopping for schooling purposes or simply for a safer place to sleep or stay outside late at night. For example, Nikki would city hop to first find safe

places to sleep and later to attend a better school. When I interviewed Nikki, she had recently graduated high school but was still homeless and trying to figure out her next steps. Nikki would travel to various cities at night in Los Angeles County to sleep in different parks or walk around to avoid sleeping. She recalled,

> [At] 15 and a half, I really started to experience homeless. I was sleeping in parks. I slept at Freedom Park. And then after that I was going to Lincoln. I was sleeping in Chamberlain Park. Um, I can't remember the other parks I was sleeping at, it was a point where I didn't even sleep like that because I didn't trust the areas. I didn't trust the environments and stuff like that. Sometimes I would take a whole bus to North Lincoln, get on the train, walk around and then do it all over again, like back and forth. Just for me not to sleep.

In Los Angeles County, many communities characterized as struggling or precarious do not have many parks—and the limited parks that were available in Wade, from Nikki's perspective, were unsafe. As such, Nikki exercised personal agency to ensure her safety. At fifteen years old she wandered and slept on the streets of an affluent area on the other side of the County from where she attended school to ensure she was safe at night. Though the charter school knew about her circumstances, they violated her MVA rights and did not provide her with any resources. Tired of traveling across districts and frequently being late to school, she attended an alternative school in Richstead Unified School District her senior year. Further, while she never lived in Richstead, the district's school counselor and the homeless liaisons worked together to help Nikki enroll in Richstead and arrange a flexible class schedule to ensure she was able to have a part-time job and still graduate. While Nikki was staying in a homeless shelter at the time of her interview, she felt that she was in a better place:

> I got my high school diploma and like everything changed, everything changed. I was still homeless, but it wasn't as bad as sleeping in parks and stuff. I took that diploma and I was like, okay, I'm gonna take this diploma and I'm really focused on something that I really want to do. I really want to become a poet.

Nikki showed her use of aspirational capital despite her past and current housing obstacles. While Nikki's experience of sleeping in parks is one of the more extreme versions of city hoping in the youth data sample, most participants sought resources in affluent communities to meet their critical needs to survive and stay engaged in school. Nikki switching between cities for educational purposes was a common example for several youth in the study.

Living in a Precarious LA and Receiving Adequate Resources Locally

There were two participants that resided in a low resourced neighborhood, who were able to receive the services they needed without city hopping. Both Kevin and Dayon sought out local community-based organizations to receive mentorship, social emotional support, income, and navigational capital to graduate high school and pursue college. When I interviewed Dayon, he was a few months away from graduating high school and being the first person in his family to attend college. Although Dayon never received formal support from his school district, he attributed a constellation of community-based organizations and his high school basketball team with his ability to graduate high school while doubling-up.

> College Bound helped me. Also, Community Builders helped too. When I wasn't playing basketball…I was in Community Builders. So they basically do the same thing for as Black Geniuses and College Bound. They have a nice facility, and they give us time to do homework. They fed us and they picked us up from [school] in their van…everybody in that program was amazing. They were like,

the kids, were kids I wouldn't see regularly at [at my school] or any other school. They were just special, like they were smart and really helpful.

Dayon named three community-based organizations and his high school basketball team as stabilizing organizations. While none of the programs Dayon mentioned specialized in supporting youth experiencing homelessness, together they provided him with wraparound services such as income, tutoring, food, social-emotional support, and aspiration capital to pursue college. Table 25 lists the various organizations Dayon attributed to his ability to graduate high school and the resources each of the organizations provided. Dayon did not disclose his homeless status to his school because he did not feel teachers there cared to help him. While his mentor at Black Geniuses told him about MVA, Dayon stated, “I didn’t think, the school really needed to know…I used to get my work done and I didn’t need any extra tutoring.” While notifying his school liaison would have still been helpful, a point I will discuss in detail later, Dayon felt his community resources were enough.

Community-Based Organization	Resources Provided
Community Builders	• After school tutoring • Food after school • Transportation from school to their facility to his apartment • Community service opportunities • Positive peer group support
Black Geniuses	• Weekend lunch • Positive adult mentorship • Community service opportunities • Positive peer group support • Internship stipend • College scholarship
High School Basketball Team	• Extracurricular activity • Mentorship • Academic accountability
College Bound	• Navigational capital for graduating high school and college

Table 25: School and Community-based Programs that Provided Dayon with Resources

School District Coordination of Wraparound Resources in Affluent Communities

While Dayon and Kevin were able to establish a strong, local network of support for themselves, participants who lived in affluent communities were able to receive similar supports more passively. Participants like Alicia who attended school in an elite enclave were able to get her services streamlined through the coordination of her high school and homeless liaison. When I interviewed Alicia, she was months away from graduating high school and waiting to hear back from colleges. I asked her what supports she felt helped her navigate her homeless experiences in middle school and the beginning of high school. She immediately shared, "I think Westview literally saved me because if I hadn't been in Westview getting help it would had been impossible?" Alicia's homeless experience started in middle school after her parents separated and her mother became ill with a rare blood disorder. Alicia and her mother doubled-up with friends, slept in cars, and finally landed in a sober living transitional housing shelter. Throughout this instability, Alicia and her mom always resided on the border of Lincoln Unified School District and Westfield Unified School District. According to Alicia, her mother made sure she was able to enroll in Westfield. Alicia recalled, "My mom fought for me to get into Westview because it's a really good district."

Upon entering Westview, Alicia's mother notified Westview's district homeless liaison of their situation and started receiving support. Alicia remembers receiving a bookbag of food every weekend in middle school from Westview's high school homeless liaison, Mrs. Hart. She also received lightly used or new clothes, restaurant and grocery gift cards, and bus passes. By junior year Mrs. Hart connected Alicia with a part-time job at the local McDonalds.

While both Alicia and Dayon received similar types of support, how they received those resources were very different. Dayon had to personally patch together resources from multiple community-based organizations, while Alicia was able to utilize her high school homeless liaison to coordinate the resources she received. For example, Alicia was able to secure a job and internships through her homeless liaison. Alicia shared:

> Mrs. Hart would always pound me, like, "Do you have a job?" "Do you need another job?" Like, "Do you have a food?" "How are your grades?" Like, "How are you doing?" She would call me into her office all the time, like all the time…so Ms. Hart, her office is in the college career center. I got introduced to other people and then they helped me find jobs and stuff like that. So before I got my job at McDonald's, I was working at this program with the [local University]. It's like, you get paid for doing volunteer work. So I was doing that a lot, like babysitting and helping at my church.

Ms. Hart was aggressively supporting Alicia at her school and was utilizing the various partnerships that the school had to provide Alicia with opportunities. While Alicia required the motivation and foresight to utilize the resources that were provided to her, she did not have to take on the same burden of seeking out critical resources by herself. Table 26 shows the supports that Alicia received from her school and community. Though Dayon's and Alicia's school were five miles apart from each other, the divergence in their access to support was stark.

School/District Resources	Resources Provided
School Resources	• Food and snacks during school • Grocery and restaurant gift cards • Lightly used or new clothes • College advisement • Positive peer group support • Part-time job via school partnership

Local Church	• Scholarships for summer mission trips and day camps
Local YMCA	• Free membership for swimming and programing

Table 26: School and Community-based Programs that Provided Alicia with Resources

Theme III Summary

Most participants needed to leverage youth organizations, schools, and housing services in multiple cities across Los Angeles County to obtain critical resources needed to focus on graduating and to meet their basic needs. The few participants that obtained all their requisite resources from within their local community, either attended school in an affluent school district or were supported by several local community-based organizations. Youth who attended affluent school districts tended to have homeless liaisons and school personnel coordinating their support. Youth connected to several community-based organizations were able to piecemeal wraparound supports around themselves. However, for the majority of participants living in divested communities, they needed to leave their city and seek resources in more affluent communities throughout Los Angeles County.

Theme VI Losing Rights to McKinney-Vento Services

Fortunately, all of the participants were able to receive enough support through community-based organizations, caring adults at school, and afterschool sporting programs to graduate high school. Few of the participants received the supports guaranteed under MVA. Table 27 shows that a third of participants never heard of the MVA and did have the option to utilize the policy’s listed services. All the participants discussed unmet needs—such as counseling services, transportation, academic tutoring, and college advisement—that should have been meet under MVA. In this section, I revisit Alina’s journey to illustrate the disservice she

received by her not providing her with MVA services, but rather threatening her with child protective services.

	Affirmative	Negative
Knew about the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	9	14
Used McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act Services	8	15

Table 27: Youth Participants Who Knew about MVA and Used MVA Services

As mentioned earlier, Alina became an unaccompanied minor experiencing homelessness during her junior year of high school, when her mother abruptly moved to Vegas and left her in Lincoln. She attempted to disclose her homeless status to her guidance counselor, but the counselor told her that all she could do was call child protective services. As a result, Alina did not disclose and navigated school and homelessness alone. Alina was still able to thrive academically and graduated high school at the top of her class. She was accepted into seven of the eight colleges she applied to and committed to Howard University in Washington, DC. However, Alina never made it to Howard because she could not afford her flight and admittance fee of $500. While Alina attempted to utilize her familial and governmental networks, they did not have knowledge or resources to help her. She recalled:

> I sent my information to Howard because I really wanted to get into Howard University because that was my dream school. So I sent my information into Howard and they told me I need to pay the admittance fee and I needed to find plane money. I didn't have any of that. I tried the shelter, the shelter kicked me out actually because they said I was past my time and they couldn't hold me in there anymore. Around that same time, I met my boyfriend. I just turned 18 and I had

> met my boyfriend…He tried to help me, him and his mom. But his mom was on Section 8 and she had five sons to take care of... he was like, lets go try to get a loan. I was 18 at a [check cashing] place. The lady looked at me and was like, "You want a loan?" And I was like, "Yeah, a loan to get to college." She was like, "No, you are too young." And I didn't have my birth certificate or my social, all I had was my school ID.

While Alina's familial network was trying their best to help her, they did not have the money to pay for her flight or admittance fee. Her governmental support via shelters had ended and so she was left to navigate this issue on her own. For three months she tried to find ways to pay for her flight and deposit. Alina got a job and earned a check for $1,000; however, she could not cash it because she did not have state identification. When she finally called Howard's admission office a few days before orientation to explain her situation, the admission officer who answered her call replied, "It was too late." Alina tried to apply to a local community college, but because her FASFA was already assigned to Howard, she had to navigate a bureaucratic process to "prove [she] was not going Howard." Though she still planned to attend college at the time of her interview, she was already two years removed from high school and working fulltime supporting youth experiencing homelessness.

Alina's experience illustrates the potential limitation of youth relying solely on their informal networks. While informal networks provide essential supports, they are often limited in their knowledge of MVA, and they usually do not have equivalent navigational capital when it comes to transitioning from high school to college as a student impacted by homelessness. Under MVA, homeless liaisons are required to provide college counseling to youth experiencing homelessness, especially unaccompanied minors. They are also responsible for helping

unaccompanied minors receive essential documents such as state identification cards and birth certificates. If Alina's school provided her with the services she legally deserved, she would have been enrolled at Howard University. Alina was not the only youth who ran into hurdles applying to college due to the lack counseling support—Dayon, Helen, and Robert also struggled transitioning from high school to college due to lack MVA services.

Conclusion

For youth in this study, graduating high school required capital from several different networks. Each participant gained critical resources from a combination of familial, communal, educational, and governmental networks they established. The accumulative capital from their different networks was enough for resources to complete school. However, it is important to note that only eight participants in the study utilized the formal resources provided under MVA and the majority of the participants had academic, transportation, and counseling needs that should have been filled by MVA.

Many participants, particularly Black youth, actively opted out of sharing their homeless experiences with school personnel due to their school's overreliance on punitive public institutions, namely the criminal justice system and child protective services. To avoid separating their families or their parent(s) being arrested, youth did not disclose their homeless status and built their network of support. However, youth's decision to avoid formal school support came at the cost of not receiving federally mandated services.

Last, most participants needed to leverage multiple organizations and institutions across Los Angeles County to obtain critical resources for graduating and meeting their basic needs. The few participants that obtained all the resources they needed in their local community, either attended schools in an affluent school district or were supported by several local community-

based organizations. The participants who attended affluent school districts tended to have homeless liaisons and school personnel helping them coordinate resources. The participants that were connected to several community-based organizations were able to piecemeal supports around them. However, most of the participants living in divested communities, needed to leave their city and seek resources in more affluent communities throughout Los Angeles County.

This chapter displayed the agency that youth exhibited to navigate school and homelessness; the following chapter focuses on what two school districts were doing to best support students experiencing homelessness. The next chapter also explores positive practices, procedures, and resources that Westview and Richstead Unified School District used to support their students experiencing homelessness.

Network Type	Network Subgroup	Participant Quote	Resources Provided
Familial Network	Family	"So, um, everybody's doing the best they can to just like, you know, to feed themselves, like me and my brother. He [My brother] took care of me mainly when I was [homeless], when no one else could…So when, I was hungry. He was the one feeding me." Lisa, Class of 2020	• Temporary Housing • Transportation • Food • Aspirational Capital • Resistance Capital
	Friend	"Natalie, she was like my best friend ever since the beginning of ninth grade basically… [her family] had a two-bedroom apartment. Her parents in one. Her and her brother in another. And I would sleep with her." Helen, Class of 2018	• Temporary Housing • Transportation • Food • Aspirational Capital • Navigational Capital
Communal Network	Youth Development Organizations	"The Black Male Youth Academy… I signed up for the program and I fell in love with it. The Executive Director was in there preaching to us about college and going to college... But he should me a way I could do it." Kevin, Class of 2012	• Navigational Capital • Aspiration Capital • Money
	Local Jobs	"I turned fifteen and a half basically or like sixteen almost, I got a job at Togo's. The sandwich shop right down the street from my mom's apartment. And, uhm, I started working and paying rent and I lived with her for a bit." Helen, Class of 2018	• Money
	Churches	"In high school, I started going to this church. She [the pastor] pretty much gave you the floor to talk about anything that is bothering you or anything you wanted to tell her . . . She was pretty supportive and always prayed for me. It kind of	• Aspirational Capital • Social Capital • Food

		motivated me a lot. You know, because [church] is all about uplifting people. It helped out a lot.” Robert, Class of 2013	• Clothes • Temporary Housing
Educational Network	Individual School Staff	“I came in below basic levels in math, but Mr. Chatterjee did a good job of being very interactive. He had group projects—for a math teacher, I think he did the best job you could do to make math engaging and to make sure you actually learn. . .He invested in me. I went in his classroom a lot during lunch for tutoring and just to talk to him. So we ended up getting close. So I feel like, Mr. Chatterjee really made a difference when it came to math for me.” Marcus, Class of 2015	• Navigational Capital • Aspiration Capital • Academic Support
	School District Homeless Liaison	“[The homeless liaison] helped me with this program. I forgot what the program was called, but it's a homeless program where you don't gotta do the whole full credit.” Nikki, Class of 2020	• Transportation • Food • Aspirational Capital • Navigational Capital
	Individual Sport Coach	“So eleventh grade, end of eleventh grade, I decided I wanted to cheer and also I'd got a job at Denny's. And so in order for me to cheer I had to have a certain GPA. I think the minimum was a 2.5. So, I was like okay I wanna be on the cheer team I need to make sure my grades are intact, so that was what kinda helped turn around my pattern of not doing well in school. And, I just tried to keep balance between school, work, and cheer. Like, I didn't wanna fail out of anything.” Jamelle, Class of 2012	• Transportation • Food • Aspirational Capital
Governmental Network	City or County Agency	I got connected to CalFresh because of County building down the street. I walked my butt to the County building. I took my information and I signed up. Lisa, Class of 2020	• Food • Employment
	Homeless Shelter / Outreach Center	“It's called bridge housing and they pretty much help people get connected to the next steps in their life, so that way they can have their own housing.” Rashad, Senior	• Transportation • Food • Aspirational Capital • Navigational Capital

Table 28. Student Network Types for High School Success with Examples

CHAPTER 7

SCHOOL DISTRICT RESPONSE TO STUDENT HOMELESSNESS

Introduction

Although many youth in this study did not utilize school district homeless liaisons as formal supports, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVA) is critical to helping students experiencing homelessness graduate high school. I analyzed two school districts that had above average graduation rates for students experiencing homelessness to understand how they were leveraging their resources to such a vulnerable student population. One district, Westview Unified School District, was located in an affluent, elite enclave in Los Angeles County. The other district, Richstead Unified School District, was in a divested community. In this chapter, I discuss the two major themes. First, homeless liaison and staff from Westview Unified School and Richstead highlighted five key features that they attributed to their ability to support students impacted by homeless. Second, even though both districts had dedicated liaisons, the impact of the liaison in Richstead was limited by the district's inability to establish partnerships.

Theme I: Six Key Features to Support Students Experiencing Homelessness

When talking to homeless liaisons, school staff, and community-based organizations across Westview and Richstead, six key features were often mentioned as key strategies for supporting youth impacted by homelessness. Those strategies were (1) having a qualified and dedicated homeless liaison, (2) considering racial demographics of the homeless population when establishing programming and partnerships, (3) embedding community-based organizations to support students experiencing homelessness inside the school district office, (4) established partnerships with community partners to meet the needs of students experiencing

homelessness, (5) establishing coherence from the school board members down to teachers, and (6) aligning school district homeless services resources with City and County resources. Table 29 lists each feature and states whether the districts possessed each one. The table shows that both school districts utilized at least four of the six features. In this section, I discuss all of the six features and illustrate how each feature was utilized to support students impacted by homelessness. I use Richstead to discuss the first three features, and Westview to discuss the last three.

Six Effective Strategies	Richstead USD	Westview USD
Have a qualified and dedicated homeless liaison	Yes	Yes
Considered racial demographics of homeless population when establishing programing and providing services	Yes	No
Embedded a CBO in school district office to support students experience homelessness	Yes	No
Established partnerships with their community to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness	Yes	Yes
Established coherence from school board members down to teachers	No	Yes
Aligned school district homeless services resources with city and county resources	No	Yes

Table 29. Six Strategies Listed as Effective and which Ones Districts Utilized

Qualified Homeless Liaison

Westfield and Richstead Unified School District both hired veteran school administrators with technical and adaptive skills to build their homeless services district programs. Table 30 summarizes the professional experiences of each liaison. Each liaison had over 20 years of professional experience working in schools as well as being school administrators; they were all

in the position for two years when I interviewed them. I had the opportunity to interview and observe the current homeless liaisons, Dr. Stewart and Mrs. Ramirez, and the previous homeless liaisons, Mr. Parks and Mr. Wright, for each district. In both cases, the previous homeless liaison revamped the office and was responsible for the programming and partnerships that I observed during the study. While their managerial and administrative experiences were sound, their ability to demonstrate trust and build relationships were also paramount to their success.

District	Homeless Liaison	Race/ Ethnicity	Years of Education Experience	Years in Position when Interviewed	Previous Leadership Experiences	Advanced Degrees
Richstead USD	Mr. Michael Parks	Black	20+	5	• County Foster Care Liaison • Juvenile Halls Administrator	Master's of Social Work
	Dr. Dean Stewart	White	*20+*	2	• Teacher • School Administrator • Dir. of District Pupil Services	Doctorate of Education
Westview USD	Mr. Dwight Wright	White	*30+*	9	• Teacher • Assistant Principal • Principal	Unknown
	Mrs. Monique Ramirez	Latina	*20+*	2	• Teacher • Assistant Principal • Principal	Master's of Education

Table 30. Richstead and Westview Liaison Qualifications

Each liaison brought a high level of demonstrated trust and an ability to build relationships with community members that helped their respective program operate

successfully. For example, Dr. Steward was the director of Richstead's Pupil Services District Office and he hired Mr. Parks as the homeless liaison. For three years, Dr. Steward and Mr. Parks worked together to build the Richstead Unified School District homeless services program. Dr. Steward left on medical leave for two years and when she returned Mr. Parks left the position and she transitioned fulltime into his role. Dr. Steward's experience as a longtime school principal in the district allowed her to establish trust and strong partnerships with local community based organizations. Her experience as an administrator in the district provided her with a deep connection with the Richstead community which helped her build rapport with families. Often her former elementary students would come into the district office requesting her support because of positive experiences they had with her in the past. She recalled that,

> And a lot of times I might have the kids walk with me, tell me what's going on with you. And that's so a lot of times here, I see kids that I was their principal. Now they're parents and they're bringing their kids and they are like 'No, no, no. I want to talk to Dr. Stewart.' because, it's important that people know you care.

Dr. Stewart's deep connections with her elementary school students from 20 ago translated to those children becoming parents and trusting the support and advice Dr. Steward would provide. Her authenticity and trust were critical, because as highlighted in the youth participants' findings, families often did not trust their school district and thus did not disclose their housing status.

Considered Racial, Housing Context, Document Trends when Providing Services

In addition to their technical and adaptive skillsets, both Dr. Stewart and Mr. Parks were cognizant of the racial, living context, and documentation status within their student homeless population and attempted to address their community members' needs with a racial lens in mind.

When I asked Mr. Parks if there were racial disparities in Richstead's student homeless population, he immediately responded that Black people were overrepresented and described the different living conditions of Black and Latino/a families. He shared that Black families who were identified as homelessness were often living in some of the worst conditions, and as a result, they were a priority population for his office. Mr. Parks expounded:

> So, the demographics in Richstead have shifted. There are more Hispanic students than there are African American students. However, the African American population has more of a percentage of homelessness than the Hispanic. So I knew that was coming but I would focus on the needs… [if you drive down near the high way] you are going to see rows of motels. That was pretty much the hub for where our homeless families were…I was proactive, I would go into the motels… I would make sure the families had everything they needed.
>
> Earl: Were there mostly Black families living in the motels?
>
> Mr. Parks: All Black.
>
> Earl: So where are the Latino kids staying?
>
> Mr. Parks: They are doubled up, four to five a house.

Mr. Parks knew the racial disparities within his district's homeless population and targeted the areas where the highest need portion of the population resided. In strategic response to Black youth living in the most precarious housing situations, his office would seek out organizations with strong connections in the Richstead Black community. For example, Mr. Parks and Dr. Stewart built an informal partnership with Heroes for Youth, a community-based family organization with strong ties to Black churches and community members in Richstead. Heroes

for Youth was a helpful resource because its staff understood the unique circumstances of Richstead, and they were especially trusted within the city's Black community.

Mr. Parks also acknowledged a growing number of undocumented youth who were experiencing homelessness. During my site observations, he made several phone calls attempting to find organizations in the area who supported families experiencing homelessness while also being undocumented. He shared that a larger number of undocumented, Latino/a families in Richstead were in need of more support as they were shifting from doubling up with family members to living in their cars. Though Mr. Parks did not report finding the adequate services for undocumented youth, the attempts he made showed that Richstead's liaison was taking into consideration factors like race, housing context, and documentation status when providing families with services.

Embedded CBO in the School District Department

Dr. Stewart and Mr. Parks both described the decision to embed non-profit organizations into their district office as an effective feature of their service program. Richstead did not have a robust and comprehensive list of local partners, but Dr. Stewart and Mr. Parks were able to establish a critical partnership with Thrive Family Shelter from a neighboring city. Thrive was located in Westview; however, the two liaisons were able to cultivate a relationship with Thrive's executive director, Sandra Hines, and co-locate a staff member of Thrive in their district office. In the following interview excerpt, Dr. Stewart describes how the partnership worked:

> So the shelters that were here when I first arrived, they closed down. But Thrive Family Shelter, what it did is that it placed our kids in Beach City and Westview and we would do the intake in Richstead. We had their people housed here in the

> department…if a parent says, “Ma'am, I don't have a place” I can say, “Let me walk you over. And [Thrive] is going to do an intake.”

When this study started the city of Richstead did not have a family shelter for over five years. The family shelter that was previously in Richstead was closed due to mismanagement and was had yet to be replaced. To address this critical need, Dr. Steward and Mr. Parks established mutually beneficial partnership with Thrive. Thrive was able to receive free space and a referral pipeline to provide their services, while Westview homeless liaisons were able to provide housing service to their families. As Sandra described it, “[Richstead] is providing us with the actual space and they're sending us the families… and for us, [the partnership] provides us an inroad into this black box of the school district and all these kids that are for whom they have no resources.” The partnership was a “win-win” for both parties because co-locating with Richstead allowed Thrive to expand its service footprint into a new community with great need. As a Director of Pupil Services, Dr. Stewart was able to approve the partnership and Mr. Parks cultivated the relationship. The partnership was successful for five years, however, it weakened while Dr. Steward was on medical leave and her position was in flux. The new directors had a particular vision for the department, which lead to misalignment between the school district and Thrive. Dr. Stewart is currently mending this relationship.

Partnerships with Community

Westview’s liaison Mr. Wright was also a former administrator. However, his administrative experience came from having worked at a private catholic school for over fifteen years. His private school experience taught him how to seek out partnerships and support on behalf of youth. When I asked him to identify an important trait that all liaisons must have, he responded, “They must know how to ask for things outright.” He further expounded:

> I will say, my experience having been principal of a poor catholic high school that did not have money to pay bills, I frequently went up to people asking them outright for money. So I know it is an art to directly asking, 'Will you do this for this family?' 'Will you give them money?' And you need to have an openness and willingness to do it. For example, I would call an auto mechanic and ask them "If I had a family that need to repair their car, could I bring them over there and you give them a discount?" You know, that type of proactiveness is important.

Mr. Wright's prior administrative experience taught him how to preemptively seek support. This skillset is incredibly vital for the liaison position because MVA funding is inadequate and requires charitable donations as major resource stream. In the example he shared, Mr. Wright showed his ability to anticipate a family's potential needs and proactively find partners to alleviate those needs. Throughout our interview, Mr. Wright made reference to proactively making relationships with mechanics, motel supervisors, and other businesses in the community to help support families.

While both districts established partnerships, Westview's program was extensive and comprehensive. Mr. Wright along with Mrs. Hart, and Mrs. Marie from Westview high school's in counseling and career department, established what they coined, "Westview Support Committee" in 2015. The Westside Support Committee (WSC) was a monthly meeting of community organizations and community members in Westview that wanted to support low-income families impacted by homelessness. Mr. Wright ran it. He, Mrs. Marie, and Mrs. Hart actively recruited people, and WSC became their engine for supporting students experiencing homelessness. During my interview with Mr. Wright, he provided an example of how WSC worked:

> I had two kids that had to jump out of a second story because their home was on fire. Luckily, they did not have serious physical injuries but they were really traumatized. So I asked Health Up Counseling Center which is on [WSC]. And I said, 'You know, they don't have insurance.' But they said, 'You know what, we will provide free counseling for them to help them get over this trauma.' And Thrive Family Shelter said, 'They are , we will take them in!' Some other parents chipped in on food and stuff like that. So it has grown now to a group to about 45 people and organizations and it is kind of like specialized but in terms of needs that might come up."

Mr. Wright curated a list of around 300 families who were low-income or identified as experiencing homelessness and WSC provided those families specialized services with a particular focus on those who were experiencing homelessness. The three founders solicited support from surrounding businesses, charities, and residents to meet all their students' needs. Mrs. Hart and Mrs. Marie were the backbone of the WSC and volunteered multiple hours a week to ensure various initiatives WSC established were successful. For example, Mrs. Marie volunteered an additional 40 hours on top of her regular work hours for one event to provide students with school supplies and food. She expounded:

> The Get Ready for School Event was easily a 40-hour week for me, over and above my regular assignment. Just getting everything ready, managing the donations, prepping, getting the staff together, it is truly a labor of love.

Both Mrs. Marie and Mrs. Hart were unofficial liaisons at the high school and their work with WSC was voluntarily. When I asked Mrs. Marie why she dedicated so much of her time to supporting students experiencing homelessness, she responded, "It literally takes a village."

Table 31 provides a list of all the services that WSC and Westview's liaisons and staff mentioned in our interviews. Table 3 shows that their extensive partnerships with community organizations allowed them to provide the necessary wraparound supports needed to help their students experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, their partners came from various stakeholders' groups in the community. Small businesses, large business chains, churches, non-profit agencies, city government, parent teacher associations, and individual residents all supported WSC.

	Services	Providers/Partners
Health and wellness	• Mental health services	• Local counseling services center
	• Physical health	• Local health clinic
	• Eye exams	• Local university
Academic support and supplies	• In-school tutoring	• Teachers
	• Out of school tutoring	• Regional tutoring organization
	• Laptops (for remote learning)	• Private donors
Food	• In-school food pantry	• Local restaurant chains and branch supermarket
	• Gift cards to restaurant chains, and grocery stores	• Local food bank
	• Weekly farmers market	• Local family foundation
	• Daily food truck (during COVID lockdown)	• Private donors
	• Weekend backpack food program	• Westview parent teacher association
Housing	• Interim housing	• Local interim family shelter
	• Section 8 voucher priority	• City government
	• Motel vouchers	• Private donors
	• Furniture	• Private donors
Seasonal events	• Beginning of the year school drive	• Various charities and businesses
	• Thanksgiving dinner bag	• Local church and community members
	• Winter coat drive	• Local girls scout troop
	• Christmas presents	• Community members, local police department
	• Prom dress donations	• Macys and other local retail stores
Clothes	• In-school free thrift store	• Community members and various retail stores

	• Local thrift shop	• Local university, CalWORKs
Employment	• Part-time jobs and internships	• liaisons MVA budget, mayor's office
Transportation	• Bus passes	• liaisons MVA budget, mayor's office, westview city bus
	• Car repairs	• Local mechanics, private donors

Table 31: Services Westview USD Offered Students experiencing

Top-down Coherence: From School Board Members to Teachers

While Mr. Wright, Mrs. Marie, and Mrs. Hart established WSC and several of its initiatives were bottom-up, their programming was part of the school district's vision for supporting all its students. Mr. Wright was in lockstep with Westview's superintendent and school board's model for serving the whole child. Moreover, the entire school community, including teachers and staff, understood the protocol for helping students who may be experiencing homelessness.

Mr. Wright and Mrs. Marie both credited their former superintendent for establishing the district's Whole Child, Whole Community Initiative that they utilized. Mr. Wright recalled,

> In 2013 under superintendent Michael Wallace, it was his idea to launch the Whole Child, Whole Community Initiative and he thought I would be a good partner with him in rolling that out. To assist our lower income families. We definitely met the needs for our students, but we also reached out to parents to let them know where available resources were.

Superintendent Wallace empowered Mr. Wright to establish several partnerships to not only ensure he was meeting the needs of students experiencing homelessness, but also to serve all low-income students. The whole child, whole community model was a multi-tiered system of support (discussed in Chapter 2), where the school district assumed the responsibility of aligning

its resources and practices with community partners and municipalities to support a child's holistic needs. The whole child, whole community model became Superintendent Wallace's overarching organizing structure that aligned the district's academic and social emotional philosophies. For example, Westview High School established a block within the school day for students who struggled in class to receive peer-tutoring. This infrastructure greatly benefited students who were experiencing homelessness and in need of tutoring support. Moreover, if a student needed more support, Mr. Wright would utilize his department's funding to pay a teacher to provide additional tutoring services as well. In the excerpt below, Mr. Wright describes how his office and the high school support students experiencing homelessness.

> Built into the academic day we have what we call Python Plus. Where there is intervention time where classroom teachers are in the classroom to help students with their academics. Some students are told you really need to come in to get help but if they not getting help they are having a longer nutrition period, talking with their friends, playing basketball, doing whatever kids do… If a teacher lets us know a student is having problems in math [for example], we will use our Title 1 funds to have a one-on-one tutoring by a teacher rather than a peer to try to get them up to speed.

Westview High School had built in a time period where students could receive additional help. Mr. Wright was able to use that infrastructure to provide additional academic support students in need. While teachers did informally help students during this period, Mr. Wright would also pay teachers an hourly stipend to tutor struggling students who needed more intensive support. This tutoring benefit only worked in Westview because the superintendent and Westview's principal organized the campus's bell schedule to be conducive to this support. Although Superintendent

Wallace retired more than five years ago, the district kept true the whole child, whole community philosophy and the school board made sure to hire a superintendent who aligned with the whole child, whole community approach.

Not only did Westview's school board support the whole child, whole community approach, they also supported the model by the institutionalizing of Mr. Wright's work. When Mr. Wright retired in 2019 and Mrs. Ramirez transitioned into the position of student liaison, Westview's school board acknowledged the work of WSC and made it a formal part of Mrs. Ramirez's position. The board also created an additional homeless coordinator position to help Mrs. Ramirez formalize many of the initiatives and informal relationships that Mr. Wright established over the decade. School Board Member Brown shared her rationale for approving the new position:

> So now [WSC] it is being more formalized. There's some structure being built, you know, to make sure that it's sustainable through leadership change, because it is it's absolutely needed. But for it to be sustainable and offer some continuity of care to all of the students that it supports we needed infrastructure. And so that's why brought Mrs. Ramirez and Dr. Ingles to the position and that is they are doing that right now.

The student homeless services work in Westview was able to grow from the ground up, but also received critical support from senior leadership within the school district. Mr. Wright, and now Mrs. Ramirez, are empowered to create and foster partnerships with the greater community. More importantly, the superintendent and school members are fully aware of the work are working along the homeless services program. For example, I first met School Board Member

Brown, when I observed one of WSC monthly meetings. She was an active member of WSC and has embedded WSC into her board responsibilities.

The homeless services work is not only aligned at the district leadership level but also the school staff level. High school teachers were fully aware of the various resources their school and school district provided students in need and they contributed to WSC. For example, high school teacher Abby Thorne shared that she and other teachers donated to the school's family thrift store. When I asked if her school had supports for students who may be experiencing homelessness, she referred to the thrift store:

> We also have, we would call it Westview Closet. I don't know like how to describe it, but imagine you need shoes, you need personal hygiene stuff, maybe your family had a disaster and you need like bedsheets and plates. We got them. They are free, go get them. And it's all donation based. And I had donated stuff that were gifts to me that still have tags on them.

Abby, like the three other Westview teachers I interviewed, knew of the resources available to students who may be experiencing homelessness. More importantly, they knew if a student displayed a need for additional support such as food, clothes, or housing, their job was to refer them to the school's thrift store that was ran by Mrs. Hart—the unofficial high school homeless liaison. Once students came to Mrs. Hart, she would assess the student's needs and notify the district homeless liaisons if they qualified for MVA services. Principal Brown affirmed that this had been the informal protocol at the high school since she became principal in 2015 and that her and district administrators were working to formalize this process in case Mrs. Hart transitioned to a new position or retired.

Although Westview was in the process of formalizing its procedures and practices, its school board members, superintendent, district homeless liaisons, high school principal, counselors, and teachers all knew about the homeless services available to students experiencing homeless and were well positioned to inform students of these resources.

School District Homeless Service resources Alignment with City and County Resources

Westview Unified School District's alignment extended beyond school sites and included their city and county government. As mentioned in Chapter 5, most school districts were not included in their city's strategic planning to end homelessness and did not benefit from County funding; Westview was one of the outliers. The City of Westview was able to utilize Los Angeles County planning grant funding and received more than $450,000 to create and support their city plan for addressing homelessness. Mr. Wright advised the city council's planning committee meetings on how the City and District could collaborate. When I interviewed Westview's city homeless committee chair, he described how his committee collaborated with school district homeless liaisons:

> They have a staff person at the district whose job is pupil personnel services who oversees support for homeless families. That person and their committees come to our meeting. For example, like we did a three-year homeless plan and we knew that we needed to make sure we had their participation, so invited them to come. When they started a new project to provide, backpack lunches and clothing to homeless families and homeless students, we invited them to come and present so we could see how we could collaborate on those kinds of things.

Mr. Wright's involvement in the city's homeless planning meetings ensured that the school district was part of the city council's solution for addressing homelessness in Westview. The

collaboration also ensured that city council members were aware of the school district's initiatives to address student homelessness. Moreover, the City Council was positioned to actively recruit WSC partners. For example, Thrive Family Shelter was introduced and recruited to partner with Westview USD by a council member. In the excerpt below, Thrive Executive Director Sandra Hines recalled being recruited at lunch:

> After eating she said, "You know what, let's go with the superintendent's office." So after lunch, we walked over to the superintendent's office, she introducing us, and I talk about what we are doing in Richstead and all of that. And she's like, "I want this to happen in Westview." And the next thing you know, it was happening at Richstead.

The open lines of communication and information sharing allowed for the school district and city government to collaborate in a meaningful way to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness. In additional to being connected to Westview's City Council, Westview's mayor's office also had their homeless coordinator attend WSC regularly. The homeless coordinator was at both WSC meetings I observed. She provided the committee with an update from the mayor's office and was proactively problem-solving issues. Her office regularly provided transportation cards to families and attempted to prioritize school district families for Section 8 city housing vouchers. The cross-connections were viewed by participants in the study as a critical feature of their program to support their students experiencing homelessness en route to graduate. Additionally, Westview was able use County funding to subsidize the various resources the district received. Westfield USD had agencies on WSC that received funding from the County and while the district itself did not receive funding, they leverage partner agencies' Measure H resources.

Theme I Summary

Westview Unified School District and Richstead Unified School District both had key features in their homeless services plans that positioned them to successfully support students experiencing homelessness and ensure those students were on track to graduate. Those strategies were (1) having a qualified and dedicated homeless liaison, (2) considering racial demographics of the homeless population when establishing programming, (3) embedding community-based organizations to support students experiencing homelessness inside the school district office, (3) established partnerships with community partners to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness, (5) establishing coherence from the school board members down to teachers, and (6) aligning school district homeless services resources with city and county resources. While neither school district reported all six of these features in their interviews, participants from both districts felt the features they used significantly attributed to their ability to support students experiencing homelessness which ultimately led to helping them graduate.

Theme II: District's Institutional Network

While Westview USD and Richstead USD both reported high graduation rates for their population of students experiencing homelessness, had highly qualified liaisons, and were only 15 miles apart from each other, their resources for supporting their students and their access to resources were not the same. Table 4 provides a side-by-side comparison of the cities of Richstead and Westview. Richstead is twice the physical size of Westview, serves eight times as many students who have been identified as socioeconomically disadvantaged, and has four times the number of students experiencing homelessness. Despite Richstead serving more residents and being a larger city, Richstead's homeless liaisons did not have access to as many for-profit and non-profit partnerships compared to the more affluent Westview. The cumulative assets of the

non-profit organizations in Westview were 25 times those of non-profit organizations in the larger city of Richstead. This disparity of need and resources limited Richstead's access to community partners. This limited access to partners was exacerbated by the lack of organizational alignment at both the district and city level. In this section, I compare Richstead's access to local community-based organizations with that of Westview. I then discuss the lack of local partnerships required Richstead liaisons to seek resources outside of their city. Lastly, I discuss how Richstead's internal misalignment made it more difficult for Richstead liaisons to establish a wide network of support.

	The City of Westview	The City of Richstead	Comparison Statements between Richstead and Westview
Land Area (in miles squared)	5.11 mi^2	10.01 mi^2	Richstead is 1.96 times the size of Westview.
The Five LA Counties Clusters	Elite Enclave (HDI 8)	Struggling Los Angeles (HDI 3)	Richstead is in a regionally divested region of Los Angeles County and Westview is in an affluent region.
City Population	38, 895	96,404	Richstead has 2.47 times more residents than Westview.
Percent of Residents in Poverty	06%	20%	Richstead's poverty rate is 3.33 times the poverty rate Westview.
Number of Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students	2,677	21,753	Richstead has 8.13 times more socioeconomically disadvantaged students in its school district than Westview's school district.
Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness	109	482	Richstead has 4.42 times more socioeconomically disadvantaged students in its school district than Westview's school district.
Gross Assets of City's Non-Profits	$1,553, 674, 271	$62, 465, 772	Westview's non-profits have a cumulative gross asset amount that is 24.87 times that of Richstead's non-profit organizations.

Table 32: Richstead and Westview City Comparison

Inequitable Access to Resources

Richstead USD liaisons did not have access to city and community partners in to a degree that was equitable or even equal to that of Westfield because their city did not have the same number of stable businesses or community-based organizations. As discussed in Chapter 4, racist housing policies and practices in the1950s and reverse redlining in the 1990s and early 2000s negatively impacted the tax base and job market in the city of Richstead. As a result of decades of public and private divestment in the city, the number of private businesses based in Richstead was extremely limited in comparison to Westview. Jacob Martin, a senior city administrator in Richstead, stated that the city did not have luxury retail stores or many large companies. Jacob shared:

> We had very limited and minimal services and amenities for our, our community, right? So, you know, we were limited in the type of retail opportunities for our residents. They're limited in the type of extracurricular entertainment options…we were not heavy in and fine dining, or even sit-down restaurants. We technically don't have any sit-down restaurants in Westview unfortunately. The city doesn't have any higher in retail, soft goods, you know, clothing, apparel, furniture, or any of some of those other providers, which can provide a lot of sales tax revenue.

Richstead did have large retailers like Target and Walmart, which the district partnered with for broader school district initiatives. The city, however, did not have many business partners, specifically for their homeless liaisons to establish a partnership that met the needs of students experiencing homelessness. In contrast, Westview has a national sport organization, entertainment headquarters, large technology companies, a large mall, restaurants, and various

tourist attractions. Not only did those businesses support the city's tax-base, but they were also corporate donors to Westfield Unified School District. For example, Westview's mall was where WSC received their prom dress donations, restaurants provided gift cards to their homeless liaisons, and a representative from the national sport organization was a member of WSC. Richstead did not have the same type of companies in its city for the school district to establish partnerships.

In addition to having limited local for-profit business partners, Richstead also had a small number of stable non-profit organizations. Stable non-profits typically hold three months of assets to cover their operational costs to ensure there is funding to pay staff and provide service continuity. In Richstead, several of their registered non-profit organizations reported zero dollars of assets in 2019. Table 5 lists different categories of non-profits that could be potential partner organizations with the Richstead homeless liaison. Table 5 further shows that out 258 non-profit organizations registered in Richstead, 93% of the organizations reported less than two dollars of assets. The 29 youth development programs registered in Richstead had a combined $8,124 in assets. Further, the school district's educational foundation reported $0 of assets in 2019 as well. Richstead's lack of a stable non-profit base narrowed the number of organizations that Dr. Stewart and Mr. Parks could rely on to provide their students with adequate wraparounds. This was not the case for Westview. Reviewing the same categories of non-profits, Westview had more than 100 stable organizations. The city's youth developments organizations alone held more combined assets than all the registered non-profits in Richstead combined, $73,811,928 and $62,465,772, respectively.

Non-Profit Category	Number of Organizations	Number of Organizations with Less than Two Dollars of Reported Assets	Percentage of Organizations with Less than Two Dollars of Reported assets	Cumulative Gross Assets
Arts and Culture	7	6	86%	$3,367
Education Services	19	18	95%	$77,761
Education Foundations	1	1	100%	$0
Homeless Services	9	8	89%	$13,153
Philanthropic Foundations	4	3	75%	$ 910,879
Parent Teacher Associations	7	7	100%	$0
Religious Organizations	170	161	95%	$576,268
Sports Programs	12	10	83%	$583,646
School Booster Clubs	0	0	N/A	$0
Youth Development Programs and Organizing	29	27	93%	$8,124
	258	**241**	**93%**	**$2,173,198**

Table 33 Richstead Non-profit Organizations Cumulative Gross Assets in 2019

Lastly, the city of Richstead did not have the capacity and resources to provide the community with robust services and were also relying on community partners (often based or located outside the city) to support their initiatives as well. In the excerpt below, city official Jacob Martin discussed the Richstead's government limited capacity. He shared:

> Capacity is very important, because you gotta have the internal structure and capacity to be able to operate, and implement programs. So from the city perspective, we are very thin staffed. And having an organization that's pretty lean and already, um, kind of overleveraged as relates to priorities and responsibilities. it's difficult to be very specialized, right. Oftentimes the organizations that are very well-funded or have sufficient resources, then they can have specialized services and programming, you know, or whereas government agencies that don't, we're, you're multitasking, or have to be more collaborative and work with other partners because you don't have the infrastructure in place to administer and run your own shelter or, or to fully support a YMCA financially, you know, like other communities can.

Jacob shared that the city's limited resources prevented it from providing direct services to RUSD. The city did not operate a homeless shelter or support large youth development organizations like a YMCA. Rather, the City viewed its relationship with homeless services and the school district as a "conduit" to help connect residents and the school district to Los Angeles County services. The city's lack of infrastructure limited the tangible supports a homeless liaison could receive for the district's students experiencing homelessness.

Leaving Richstead to Seek Out Partnerships

As a result of the limited organizational partners in Richstead, homeless liaisons discussed having to establish both formal and informal partnerships outside of their city and school district. Thrive Family Shelter was the chief example, provided by Dr. Steward and Mr. Parks because it was one of few organizations that they were able to establish a formal three-year partnership within a neighboring city. However, throughout my interviews with the liaisons,

most of the organizations they mentioned as partners were based outside of Richstead, and often in South Lincoln. Table 5 lists the different partnerships mentioned throughout my interviews by Dr. Stewart, Mr. Parks, and Richstead community partners. Of the 11 organizations mentioned in my interviews, only two were based in Richstead.

Relying on outside organizations as community partners helped meet some critical needs; however, they were often provided limited resources for Richstead youth. For example, partnering service organizations could not afford to replicate all their services in Richstead and would only provide limited programing in the city. Organizations like Helping Hand opened a temporary shelter in Richstead; however, their youth programing and key staff members were still located South Lincoln and were not easily accessible to most Richstead youth. Similarly, while Black Male Youth Academy, the program that met many of Kevin's needed in Wade, taught a college and career readiness course in Richstead's alternative high school, their office and additionally programming was still located several cities over in Wade.

Services	**Organization**	**Organization's Base City**
Housing	Serving America	South Lincoln
	Thrive Family Housing	Westview
	Helping Hand	South Lincoln
	Heroes for Youth	Richstead
Food	Food Bank	Orange County, CA
Early Parent Resources	Baby Care	South Lincoln
Los Angeles County of Education	Los Angeles County of Education	Countywide
Academic Tutoring	Mobile School	Countywide

Christmas and Thanksgiving Special Events	Local Food Chain	Richstead
	Basketball Star's Foundation	West Lincoln
Youth Development	Black Male Youth Academy	Wade

Table 34: Partnering Organizations Mentioned in Interviews with Richstead Participants

Lack of Coordination between the Homeless Liaison, School District, and City

The lack of private and public investment seemed to be the chief reason for the limited partnerships that were available to Richstead's homeless liaison, however, a lack of communication and coordination between the district, district liaison, and City also contributed. Liaisons discussed the misalignment between the school district board and city leadership as an additional barrier for collaboration. The liaisons and community-based organizations discussed unnecessary red tape to establish formal partnerships with organizations. Participants also discussed the lack of coordination between the city government and the school district that prevented a broader partnership.

Mr. Parks referred to many of the community partnerships he established as "informal." After Dr. Steward transitioned from the position, Mr. Parks struggled to get his program directors to approve partnerships. For example, when Mr. Parks created a relationship with the South Lincoln-based organization Baby Care that provides young parents with baby formula, diapers, and clothes, he could not convince his director or senior district leadership to approve their MOU. Mr. Park explained that Baby Care had a standard memorandum of understanding (MOU) they used for all the school districts they supported. However, Mr. Park's director was adamant that Baby Care would have to use RUSD's standard MOU template to create the formal partnership. Mr. Parks had to go around his director to get the partnership approved. He explained:

> RUSD has an administrator that outreaches to organizations that tries to bring in additional funding, campaigns--I think it is community outreach… So I thought this was a great resource, it would help many families, so I picked up the phone--I am not going to put this in an email—and contacted this man and see if he can make this happen. Because he is in different office, and he reports directly to the superintendent and that is when it worked. That took about six months, just going back and forth. It is incredible. The resources are out there, but the bureaucracy is insane.

Mr. Parks had to circumvent his superiors to establish formal partnerships with community organizations. While he was able to successfully partner with Baby Care, he did not formalize most his community-based partnerships. As a result of their lack of formality, once he transitioned to a new position, his community partnerships left with him. A similar situation happened with Thrive Family Housing, after Dr. Stewart left the director position; the subsequent directors did not update their former MOU. Thrive's staff stated that they attempted to re-sign a MOU with RUSD but stated that they ran into logistical hurdles the second time around. As mentioned earlier, Dr. Stewart is currently mending the relationship.

In addition to the misalignment between the homeless liaison and their superiors, the school district and city were also misaligned when it came to supporting students experiencing homelessness. Dr. Stewart shared that, "the city and the school district does not have a good working relationship." When Richstead created this city homeless plan, they did not include RUSD in the planning process or in any of their goals to address homelessness. While the city does not have significant infrastructure, Thrive's executive director believed pooling resources together, similar to Westview, would have been beneficial in RUSD. Thrive's executive director

tried to start a dialogue between the City and school district and concluded, “It's just super siloed.” The lack of communication between internal stakeholders in Richstead led to the homeless liaison working in isolation and stunted the program’s potential to provide more services to students experiencing homelessness.

Conclusion

Together the homeless liaisons of Richstead and Westview Unified School Districts elevated six features that supported their ability to successfully serve high school students experiencing homelessness. Both had qualified and dedicated homeless liaisons and established partnerships with community businesses and organizations to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness. Richstead homeless liaisons highlighted that they considered the racial demographics of their homeless population when providing services and establishing community-based partnerships and that they embedded community-based organizations into their office to streamline services for their families. Westview Unified was able to establish coherence from the school board members down to teachers, and successfully aligned school district homeless services resources with City and County resources.

While Richstead was able to graduate their students who experienced homelessness at the same rate as Westview, their homeless liaison’s access to community-based organizations, businesses, and City partners were severely limited. The limited resources in Richstead forced the liaison to seek partnerships outside of their city. Though they were able to establish meaningful partnerships with outside organizations, the services those organizations were able provide were narrow due to the distance from their core services, hub, or main office. In many ways, actions of the homeless liaisons in Richstead mirrored those of the youth experiencing homelessness divested communities, discussed in Chapter 6. Both groups were forced to leave

their communities to venture to more affluent communities to receive adequate support. Furthermore, the resources being provided by Los Angeles County in their region was inadequately supporting either school district and youth's needs.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 shared the key findings from county officials, youth, and homeless liaisons. The next chapter discusses the implications of these findings and introduce a new concept I have coined, the Impoverished Institutional Networks.

CHAPTER 8

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This dissertation sought to answer three broad questions:

1. How does Los Angeles County support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?
2. How do students in Los Angeles County navigate the barriers of homelessness and successfully graduate high school?
3. How do two school districts in Los Angeles County successfully support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?

To answer the research question, I conducted interviews with county and school district level personnel who provide homeless services in Los Angeles County. I spoke with senior level homeless service administrators, city officials, and county staff who work and worked directly with students experiencing homelessness, school administrators, district homeless liaisons, teachers, homeless service providers, and youth development organizations. I also interviewed youth who navigated or were navigating high school while experiencing homelessness. Across these different pockets of the homeless services delivery systems in LA County, was resounding consensus that people do not have the necessary resources to ensure that students experiencing homelessness thrive.

County's Limited Support to Students Experiencing Homelessness

For example, given a lack of personnel and funding, the Los Angeles County of Education Homeless Coordinators was unable to adequately support more than 65,000 students

identified as experiencing homelessness throughout the county. The lack of resources was a direct result of failure to include K-12 stakeholders in the Los Angeles County homeless response system. Education stakeholders were not included in the County's decision-making committees when plans for addressing homelessness were initially created. Further, when cities were incentivized to develop plans for addressing local homelessness, they were not required to include schools in their strategy. County officials interviewed in this study stated repeatedly that they needed a narrower definition of homeless in order to maximize resources for the most vulnerable homeless populations, and they felt that children living on the streets topped the priority (versus children doubling-up). Also, County officials did not consider engagement with schools as part of their core responsibilities, and they did not adequately invest funding to ensure that school districts were part of the homeless response system. As such, allotting resources to support K-12 students experiencing homelessness was an afterthought. So much so, that only 0.2% of the County's budget for addressing homelessness was dedicated to supporting youth in schools. The funding was used to establish youth regional homeless coordinators who were ultimately severely undersupported and lacked resources to support any families who were doubling-up.

Similarly under resourced, school districts and schools in some of Los Angeles County's most divested cities and neighborhoods were forced to establish informal networks to attempt meeting the basic needs of youth experiencing homelessness. Correspondingly, youth experiencing homelessness also had to create informal networks to meet their own basic needs and graduate high school. While some affluent school districts were able to leverage a myriad of local resources while also benefitting from County funding (limited as they may be), similar resources were not as readily available to districts in divested cities. As such, individuals

working or attending school in divested communities were forced to seek resources in more affluent areas. This was particularly true for youth experiencing homelessness in historically Black communities.

Race, Space, and Services

Youth who experienced homelessness in historically Black communities had to leave their areas to address essential needs and secure academic support. Youth like Nikki, for example, travelled throughout the county to find safe parks to sleep in or safe streets to wander at night. This finding corroborates previous research suggesting that historically Black communities often lack adequate resources for their students (Noguera & Alicea, 2021). Traveling city to city was common for youth participants who resided in historically Black communities. Unexpectedly, homeless liaisons who worked in historically Black communities were also forced to do the same. The homeless liaison at Richstead Unified School District, Dr. Stewart, sought partnerships with affluent cities to help provide students experiencing homelessness with shelter, clothes, personal hygiene products, and services.

It is critical to note that the lack of resources in historically Black communities in Los Angeles County is directly tied to racist housing polices of the past. Most of the participants in this study lived in historically redlined communities and communities that endured systematic public and private divestment. While Richstead Unified School District was not completely redlined in the 1930s, it was targeted for reverse redlining practices in the 1990s which ultimately lowered the city's tax base dramatically.[8] The lack of revenue in Richstead (like other historically Black communities) led to a lack of resources for attracting and supporting non-profit organizations in the city.

---

[8] See Chapter 4.

Historically racist policies did not just negatively impact Black and Latino/a communities; they actively benefited White communities. White communities profited from being sundown towns and/or blue-lined. They also benefited from having spent decades ostracizing non-White residents via racial covenants (Rothstein, 2017). For decades, not housing Black people equated to yielding public and financial capital incentives that built a city's infrastructure and established a strong tax base. A strong tax base contributed to establishing and maintaining or growing robust for-profit and non-profit sectors. While cities like Westview are no longer sundown towns and are now more racially diverse, the rich fountain of resources that the homeless liaison can maximize today, was built upon the racist policies and practices of the past. While County resources could be leveraged to counteract the cumulative disadvantage of divested communities, how the County's service planning areas are drawn reinforce the resource segregation in the county.

District Level Strategies

Westview Unified School District and Richstead Unified School District both had some key features in their homeless services plans that made it possible to successfully support students experiencing homelessness and ensure that those students were on track to graduate. Between both districts, some of the key strategies mentioned were (1) having a qualified and dedicated homeless liaison, (2) considering racial demographics of the homeless population when establishing programming, (3) embedding community-based organizations to support students experiencing homelessness inside the school district office, (4) establishing partnerships with community partners to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness, (5) establishing coherence from the school board members down to teachers, and (6) aligning school district homeless services resources with city and county resources. While neither school district

possessed all six features, homeless liaisons and other participants from both districts felt that the features their district did have greatly supported students experiencing homelessness.

Of all the features specified, establishing coherence throughout the district and aligning its administration and efforts with out-of-school agencies are particularly critical for sustaining service continuity over time. For example, Dr. Steward and Mr. Parks were able to rely on their own individual competencies to establish a successful homeless service program; however, they worked in a silo and thus the program was in flux once they left their positions. Conversely, Westview Unified School District had a coherent plan for supporting students experiencing homelessness that included stakeholders spanning from school board leadership down the hierarchical chain to school faculty and staff. When Mr. Wright left his position, not only did his successors know about his initiatives, but the entire district was able ensure that his work was codified. The school board even formalized one the most prominent informal initiatives—The Westside Needs Committee—by incorporating it into the new homeless liaison's job description. Thus, when Mrs. Ramirez became the new homeless liaison, she was able to expand upon the existing program versus creating a new homeless services program. Establishing such coherence at the district level is critical to mitigating staff turnover (Bryk et al., 2010).

Cultural Wealth and Networks

Most youth in this study—particularly those from divested communities—did not depend on Los Angeles County or their school district for support, but instead, relied heavily on their personal networks. Each participant gained critical resources via a combination of information and various support from the familial, communal, educational, and governmental networks that they established. The cumulative capital accrued from their various networks made it possible for

them to graduate high school. It's important to note that many of the participants were required to establish informal networks out of necessity rooted in structural inequities (Yosso, 2005).

For example, youth participants in historically Black communities reported receiving immense capital from Black community-based organizations (CBOs). Black CBOs like *Community Builders, Black Geniuses*, and *Black Male Youth Academy* are all examples of youth development programs that provided various resources to youth in their community who were experiencing homelessness. Despite limited funding, and no established budget to serve students experiencing homelessness specifically, these organizations assisted youth with food, employment, tutoring, mentorship, and college advising. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of access to community-based organizations for youth (Robinson, 2018; Grothaus et al., 2011; Miller, 2009). To my knowledge, however, this is the first study that emphasizes the impact of youth development CBOs—specifically Black CBOs—on youth experiencing homelessness.

Unfortunately, like many of the other informal networks of support that youth leveraged, Black CBOs did not introduce their youth to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVA). Mentors, school adults, Black CBO administrators and staff, and county agencies provided students with familial, social, and navigational capital; however, these networks were often unaware of MVA themselves. Therefore, they could not transfer knowledge to students experiencing homelessness about formal networks of support. Professionals' lack of technical information about student homelessness ultimately limited youth's access to knowledge about their educational options and their legal rights.

Impoverished Institutional Networks

Findings from this dissertation build upon Olivet and colleagues' (2018) concept of network impoverishment. Network impoverishment is "a phenomenon in which it is not just an individual or family who is experiencing poverty; their network itself functions in an impoverished state" (Olivet et al., 2018, p. 12). Family members and peers are often unable to help individuals experiencing poverty sufficiently due to their own lack of individual resources (Olivet et al., 2018). The current study both corroborates and expands upon such findings. A mixed methods study focused primarily on adult homelessness Olivet et al. (2018) does not address the challenges or the opportunities that exist for school-aged youth—particularly how access to certain networks becomes limited as youth age. For example, this dissertation provides evidence of the immense impact that networks like schools and youth development organizations could have on youth experiencing homelessness. As youth move beyond K-12, however, such opportunities become unavailable to them—a critical paradigm shift to acknowledge, because it speaks to the urgency for maximizing strong informal networks for youth.

In addition to acknowledging impoverishment within personal networks, it is equally essential to recognize impoverishment within the network of institutions that youth access. For example, findings from this dissertation show that both the County Homeless Response System and Richstead Unified School District function within what I call an *Impoverished Institutional Network* (IIN). As public institutions in an *Impoverished Institutional Network*, they lack the financial resources, communal resources, community cultural wealth, and organizational cohesion necessary to adequately support historically marginalized, vulnerable populations. As a result, they rely on punitive institutions like the criminal justice system and foster care services. Indicators for identifying an Impoverished Institutional Network include a lack of access to 1)

financial capital, 2) community partnerships, 3) community cultural wealth, 4) community cohesion. A public institution's deficiencies in one or more of the previous four indicators mentioned often lead to an overreliance on punitive practices or public institutions to address the needs of vulnerable student populations. The following section explains each indicator within the context of supporting students experiencing homelessness.

Financial Capital: Does an institution have the financial capital to provide the necessary resources to support students experiencing homelessness?

The first indicator of an impoverished institutional network is a lack of funding to compensate personnel and purchase necessary resources to support students experiencing homelessness. Despite receiving a record amount of funding to address homelessness via Measure H sales ¼ cent sales tax, Los Angeles County did not adequately fund its education coordinators. Thus, the Los Angeles County of Education Homeless Program only had the budget to fund one fulltime homeless coordinator and an administrative assistant for the entire county. They were hired to support 80 school districts and more than 350 charter schools. The Homeless Response System allocated $800,000 of additional funding; however, those funds were designated to hire eight regional coordinators schools who did not work with schools. Ultimately, budgeting allocations in the County limited the financial capital of the County Homeless Response System. In Richstead Unified School District, however, financial capital was

limited by an overall lack of funds in the district and the city. The city had a limited tax-base and the district had a lack of funding for the school in general and MVA grants specifically.

Community Partnership: Does an institution have the right community partners to provide the necessary resources to support students experiencing homelessness?

The second indicator of an impoverished institutional network is lack of access to community partners that can provide critical technical knowledge and address or mitigate the outstanding needs of youth experiencing homelessness. Limited County funding forces school districts to fund homeless services themselves. As such, community partnerships become extremely critical for offsetting costs. Richstead Unified School District struggled to establish formal partnerships with community-based organizations that could address the various needs of its students experiencing homelessness. Since homeless liaisons did not have community partners readily available, they had to exert more energy to try and create other informal partnerships.

Community Cultural Wealth: Can the institution tap into the community cultural wealth of its neighborhood to support students experiencing homelessness?

An institution's ability to leverage the cultural, social, familial, aspirational, linguistic, and resistant capital of students experiencing homelessness is critical to supporting racially marginalized students experiencing homelessness. An institution with strong community cultural wealth actively partners with community-based organizations like Black Male Youth Academy or Community Builders because they recognize the role such organizations play in supporting marginalized youth whose circumstances may be unknown or unacknowledged in school. For example, Richstead was able to leverage community cultural wealth via informal partnerships with organizations like Open Hands. County homeless coordinators who were not connected

with community-based organizations, however, had to try and support racially marginalized students experiencing homelessness—a group of students less likely to disclose their homeless status to a school district.

Community Cohesion: Do senior administrators and front-line staff in the institution know their role in supporting students experiencing homelessness?

While financial capital, community partnerships, and community cultural wealth, are all critical for providing the resources necessary to support students experiencing homelessness, they are inconsequential if an institution lacks community cohesion. Community cohesion refers to an institution's organizational alignment and connectivity with city, county, and neighborhood stakeholders. Westview Unified School District demonstrated exemplary community cohesion. In the school district, everyone knew of and contributed to the resources allocated toward supporting students experiencing homelessness within their district. The homeless liaison was able to create connections with community partners as well as county and city government to ensure that all stakeholders understood the district's approach to supporting students experiencing homelessness.

Neither the County nor Richstead Unified School District were able to establish the level of community cohesion that Westview Unified School District achieved. As mentioned previously, the Homeless Response System did not align its goals with the Los Angeles County of Education homeless coordinators. Further, because the County's youth regional coordinators

were focused on street homelessness, they had neither the scope nor the resources to support youth experiencing homelessness in schools.

Overreliance on Punitive Public Institutions: Does the institution turn to punitive public institutions to address symptoms of poverty?

A common response to the of lack financial capital, community partners, community cultural wealth, and community cohesion is entities' over-reliance on punitive practices or punitive public institutions. Public institutions like child protective services (CPS) and the criminal justice system enforce policies that often provide punitive consequences which negatively impact vulnerable families. Research shows that schools routinely overutilize CPS and/or police officers in addressing issues related to poverty and poor mental health (E. C. Edwards et al., 2020; Ghavami et al., 2021; Harvey et al., 2021). Youth participants throughout Los Angeles County, especially Black youth, expressed not disclosing their homeless status to avoid CPS or criminal justice involvement via CJS. Students also highlighted that threat of calling CPS was a punitive practice used to address traumatic behavioral responses in class by teachers. Also, as discussed in Chapter 4, the most divested and historically Black communities in LA County were overrepresented in CPS referrals. Overreliance on punitive institutions not only contributes to disproportionately high rates of Black family interactions with child protective services and the criminal justice system, but it also pushes the most vulnerable youth away from seeking critical services.

Significance of this Study

This study provides significant contributions to the education field and introduces three important contributions to the literature on student homelessness. First, this study is the only comprehensive study on student homelessness, to my knowledge, that utilizes a municipal

county as the unit of analysis. Previous studies on student homelessness have examined the phenomenon at the federal level (Miller, 2011a), state level (Bishop et al., 2020), city level (Pavlakis, 2018a), district level (Hallett, Skrla, et al., 2015), and school level (Chow et al., 2015). Using a County agency as a unit of analysis provided a unique perspective on how cities, districts, and school policies and practices interact with each other when supporting students experiencing homelessness. The broader lens helped highlight that both youth and school districts need to go beyond their school district boundaries for resources. Further, a county perspective provided insight on how county policies can either help or hinder a schools district's approach to helping students experiencing homelessness.

In addition to introducing a new stakeholder into the literature on students experiencing homelessness, this study also builds on literature discussing the impact of racism on students experiencing homelessness (Aviles de Bradley, 2015a). Aviles de Bradley (2015) discusses how colorblind policies and inequitable resources at school sites prevent Black students from receiving all their legal rights under MVA. This study builds upon this critical analysis and explains how racialized spaces perpetuate inequitable services for all students impacted by homelessness in historically Black communities. Further, the district analysis employed in this dissertation helped reveal the differences between a school district that has been historically invested in and a school district in the same county that has historically been divested from.

Last, this dissertation builds upon the framework of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2004) and the network impoverishment to introduce the concept of an Impoverished Institutional Network (IIN). IIN provides a new lens for assessing whether a public institution can respond to the various needs of students experiencing homelessness. The construct requires researchers, school leaders, and policymakers to broaden their conceptualizations of who should be included

in actualizing services to support students experiencing homelessness. In addition to providing a new lens, IIN can also be used to analyze an institution's ability to build networks that enable student and staff agency. This study illustrated explained IIN within the context of an institution's response to student homelessness, however, the construct can be used to analyze other institutional responses to marginalized populations across institutions.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by summarizing the key research findings in relation to the research questions, as well as the theoretical and practical contributions of this study for various stakeholders. The chapter will conclude with proposed opportunities for future research.

Summary of Major Findings

The dissertation deployed an embedded case study designed to explore how two school districts and the broader homeless response system of Los Angeles County supported students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school. Additionally, the study inquired how students in Los Angeles County navigated the barriers of homelessness to successfully graduate high school. To address my inquiry, I conducted 63 qualitative interviews with senior level homeless service administrators, city officials, county staff, school administrators, district homeless liaisons, teachers, homeless service providers, and youth development staff. I then analyzed more than 900 documents that included county strategic homeless plans, city strategic homelessness plans, and registered non-profit organizations tax forms. The following are summaries for the key findings based on the studies broad research questions.

Research Question 1: How does Los Angeles County support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?

The County's homeless response system excluded educational stakeholders from its key decision-making committee and did not provide most students experiencing homelessness with targeted services to support their basic living and educational needs. While County homelessness

coordinators attempted to support students and school districts, their office only consisted of two fulltime staff members who were charged with supporting 80 school districts and more than 350 charter schools with a total 70,000 students experiencing homelessness. While the County's strategic homeless plan included eight additional regional youth coordinators, those positions were only equipped to support HUD defined students experiencing, which excluded more than 50,000 students doubling-up in the school district.

Research Question 2: How do students in Los Angeles County navigate the barriers of homelessness and successfully graduate high school?

Youth experiencing homelessness in high school created their own networks of support that included people and organizations from four different types of social networks: (1) familial network, (2) communal network, (3) educational network, and (4) governmental network. The resources accrued through these organizations provided youth with enough capital to remain in school and graduate high school. While all youth created networks of support, how their network was created was based on the type of resources available in their communities. The majority of the youth in the study came from historically Black, divested communities that were negatively impacted by explicitly racist policies and practices of the past. This population of students often had to leave their divested community to seek academic resources and shelter in more affluent regions and cities in Los Angeles County. The only exception to this finding were those able to find a collection of youth development programs that provided them mentorship, employment, academic guidance, and resources for their basic needs.

The majority of the youth in this study often excluded formal school supports from their networks to avoid referrals and interactions with the criminal justice system and child protective services. The school districts' inability to cultivate trust, prevented youth experiencing

homelessness from having access to their educational rights under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. While their informal networks helped them graduate, their journey was often more difficult due to their advocates' lack of technical knowledge and awareness of the rights and guaranteed resources listed under MVA.

The youth who experienced homelessness in affluent communities in Los Angeles County were more likely to receive their resources within their school district area. Moreover, the youth were more likely to have their network of support constructed with the help of their school district homeless liaison, who also ensured their educational rights under MVA were upheld and connected them to other enrichment opportunities.

Research Question 3: How do two school districts in Los Angeles County successfully support students experiencing homelessness in their pursuit to graduate high school?

The two school districts in Los Angeles County reviewed in this study were provided the pseudonyms Richstead USD and Westview USD. Both districts reported above average graduation rates for students experiencing homelessness compared to other districts in the county. Collectively, their homeless liaisons highlighted six key program features for supporting youth impacted by homelessness. Those strategies were (1) having a qualified and dedicated homeless liaison, (2) considering racial demographics of the homeless population when establishing programming and partnerships, (3) embedding community-based organizations to support students experiencing homelessness inside the school district office, (4) established partnerships with community partners to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness, (5) establishing coherence from the school board members down to teachers, and (6) aligning school district homeless services resources with City and County resources.

Each district had qualified and dedicated homeless liaisons; however, Westview USD's ability to establish community partnerships was exponentially easier due to their affluent city's rich non-profit and for-profit community landscape. Despite the city of Richstead being twice the physical size and population of Westview, Westview's non-profit sector had 24 times the amount of gross assets as Richstead's non-profit sector. The discrepancy meant that Westview USD's homeless liaison could canvas its community for partners, while the homeless liaison in Richstead had to leave its city to establish partnerships in more affluent cities across the county.

Overarching Theme

The data of this dissertation suggests that students experiencing homelessness in communities that were historically Black and negatively impacted by racist housing policies and practices of the past, are required to establish their informal networks to compensate for the lack of resources provided to them by the Los Angeles County Homeless Response System and their local school district. By in large, the County and school districts as systems were operating in isolation despite federal policies that provide students experiencing homelessness with educational rights and historic public funding to address homelessness. While individual staff worked hard to help these vulnerable students, they were working in what this study refers to as an Impoverished Institutional Network. An Impoverished Institutional Network (IIN) is a public institution that is unable to provide the financial, communal, community cultural wealth, or organizational cohesion necessary to adequately support historically marginalized, vulnerable populations, thereby becoming overly reliant on punitive practices or punitive public institutions

like the criminal justice and foster care systems. In Chapter 1, I outlined the various ways in which the public institutions in this study fit this definition.

Academic Contributions

This dissertation provides several significant contributions to the field of education and its subfield of student homelessness. First, this dissertation builds on the existing literature discussing the ways in which race interacts with the experience of student homelessness. Aviles de Bradley (2015b) started the field's discussion on the racialized discourse surrounding student homelessness. This dissertation used structural racism as an analytical tool to demonstrate how students living and attending public high schools in communities targeted by racist policies in the past are still negatively impacted today. Aviles de Bradley (2015) asserted that the charity model, where school district's depends on non-profit agency or donations to service students experiencing homelessness, perpetuate inequitable services and disadvantages historically disenfranchised communities. This study's findings provide further evidence of Aviles de Bradley's assertion. The findings also advances the field's knowledge on the resources high school youth experiencing homelessness are utilizing to graduate and how districts are utilizing their homeless liaisons to best support students experiencing homelessness.

Establishing Impoverished Institutional Network as Conceptual and Analytical Frame

Second, this dissertation builds on Yosso's (2004) Community Cultural Wealth and Olivet et al.'s (2018) Network of Impoverishment phenomenon to create the analytical and conceptual framework Impoverished Institutional Network (IIN). Community Cultural Wealth highlights the various types of capital found in racially marginalized communities that are often overlooked by Eurocentric frames of capital. Network impoverishment describes how the limited wealth of racially marginalized individuals and their networks, due to structural racism,

contribute to racially marginalized populations becoming homeless at higher rates and for a longer duration. IIN shifts the focus of the network impoverishment from an individuals' networks to an public institution's network. Additionally, IIN posits that an institution's ability to leverage Community Cultural Wealth is a key asset of being a healthy institution positioned to support vulnerable populations, and therefore its absence is a contributor to an institution's impoverishment.

IIN provides researchers and practitioners with a tool to assess the viability of an institution's external partnerships and internal alignment to support youth experiencing homelessness. IIN accounts for racial discrimination and pushes against an over-reliance on punitive public institutions, such as Child Protective Services, the Criminal Justice System, and Immigration Customs Enforcement (a punitive institution not discussed in this study). IIN is used to describe the shortcomings of institutions supporting students experiencing homelessness in this study, but the framework can be applied to several marginalized populations and public institutions in the future.

Introducing New Stakeholders into Student Homeless Research

A third significant contribution of this dissertation is that it introduces County agencies and community-based organizations as new stakeholders in the literature on students experiencing homelessness. This study, to my knowledge, is the first to analyze students experiencing homelessness from a County or countywide perspective. While this study's findings mirrored some of same logistical barriers of supporting students as city-level studies found, such as a misaligned definitions of homelessness and poor communication across governance bodies (Pavlakis & Duffield, 2017), it introduces a new public entity whose policy decisions can enhance and influence the services local cities and school districts can provide

students impacted by homelessness. Additionally, this study also introduced the critical role that community-based organizations, specifically Black community-based organizations, play in informally supporting students experiencing homelessness. Despite not receiving specific funding for students experiencing homelessness, Black community-based, youth development organizations were actively addressing youth needs in ways that extended beyond what typical youth development service organizations provide. Both County agencies' and Black CBO's extensive roles of helping students experiencing homeless warrant additional inquiry from researchers.

Limitations and Future Academic Inquiries

This study had some recruitment limitations. The data collection period occurred before and during the COVID-19 pandemic, which escalated in March 2020. As a result of Los Angeles County's stay-at-home orders, I was unable able to actively recruit students directly from schools, universities, churches, and community centers and was required to rely more heavily on homeless shelters. This limitation may have caused an overrepresentation of youth with shelter involvement within the sample. Additionally, I was unable to conduct targeted recruitment in the

city of Westview and Richstead, which prevented me from triangulating my district-level analysis of the homeless liaisons, administrators, and school staff with a large sample of youth.

Policy and Practice Implication

The implication of this dissertation provides several policy and practice recommendations. In this section I list various recommendations for County agencies, school districts, and school sites.

County Agencies

Use a MVA definition of homelessness.

One of chief barriers to supporting students experiencing homelessness is the use of multiple definitions of homelessness. The County should adopt the MVA definition of homelessness and use County tax dollars and federal and state homeless prevention dollars to provide additional resources for families doubling-up. The use of a broader homeless definition would allow families and youth to receive resources to prevent the use of more precarious living arrangements. Additionally, the common definition will encourage better alignment between the County's education office and the County office charged with addressing homelessness.

Use county resources to support equitable allocation of resources to marginalized communities.

County agencies have the ability to provide technical assistance, funding, and partnerships to both individual school districts and cities. Instead of allocating resources equally

across their jurisdiction, they should use a racial equity lens to identify and support the communities that have been impacted by several decades of divestment.

District Office Recommendations

Hire a qualified and dedicated homeless liaison.

Hiring a homeless liaison who has experienced being an administrator, knows how to establish and maintain community partnerships, and can build rapport with students are optimal for handling and properly executing the dynamic responsibilities of the position. Also, ensure the district homelessness liaison has a team to support their work across the school district. The role of an effective liaison within a school district is extensive and requires support staff. A liaison's support staff could be co-located at a school site to ensure students have better access to support.

Consider racial demographics of the homeless population when establishing programming and partnerships.

School districts' community partnerships should include CBOs that are representative of the demographics impacted by homelessness. The organizations and entities that homeless liaisons establish partnerships with do not have to exclusively serve students experiencing homelessness but rather have credibility in the local community for helping mentor and support the social, political, academic, or professional development of youth. Lastly, school districts should invest in local CBOs that directly or indirectly support students and families impacted by

homelessness. School districts could use their institutional to ensure that the organizations have the resources to expand and become more stable.

Embed community-based organizations to support students experiencing homelessness inside the school district office and school sites.

One critical asset that most school districts have is space. Allowing homeless service organizations to co-locate at the school district helps students and families connect to critical resources that a school district may not be able to provide on its own. Further, the donated space and access to potential clients benefits the service organization as well.

Reallocate resources from punitive systems to invest more funding in counselors and community liaisons.

While school budgets are limited, many school districts have allocated substantial funding to partnerships with punitive public agencies, such as local city and school police departments. Reallocating funds from such personnel can free up funding for additional counselors who can support homeless services and establish trusting relationships with students and families.

School Site

Hire a school site homeless liaison.

Each school site should have a part-time homeless liaison to ensure students have access to resources and a dedicated staff member that has expertise in MVA policy implementation. This position could be coupled with a school counselor, parent liaison, or community liaison

position. Also, the school site liaisons should formally connect with the district liaison and meet weekly to discuss students' needs.

Establish school-based resources for the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

School sites should provide supplemental resources at the school on or via campus to provide supportive services to all families in need. Initiatives such as a food pantry, laundry service, access to hygiene products, and weekend food programs could be established at the school site. Such features allow schools to provide critical services and the campus itself can be used as outreach an site to inform families about MVA.

Inform all students, staff, and external partners on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

High school students experiencing homelessness are creating their networks of support without knowing their rights under MVA. All students should know the MVA definition of homelessness and the key services students experiencing homeless are unentitled to receive. Further, all staff and external partners should know the details and mandates of the MVA and their school's protocol for connecting students to the district homeless liaison.

Conclusion: Revisiting the Education Debt

Experiencing homelessness has lasting impacts on youth and their future opportunities, particularly due to the lack of institutional responses to their academic, social, physical, and emotional needs. As mentioned in Chapter 1, our public institutions' inability to adequately serve racially marginalized students, low-income students, and students experiencing homelessness is a debt we are all responsible to address. Chapter 6 highlighted the agency that youth demonstrated to navigate homelessness and stay engaged in school to earn their high school diploma. The youth I talked with did not just aspire to graduate high school and secure a stable job and housing

but rather desired an eventual employment position to help other vulnerable populations and contribute to their communities' cultural wealth. For example, Robert who learned about community college through a friend during his senior year—not his from his school counselors—is now a college counselor recruiting and supporting first generation college students. Alina works directly with youth experiencing homelessness. Sage is a local and national advocate for youth homeless policy. Jamelle became a teacher in her hometown and committed keeping her classroom door open for any student who needs to talk. Learning about youth in this journey, and seeing the careers they chose to pursue made me wonder: How many teachers, counselors, lawyers, doctors, scholars, and advocates are we missing because of our public institutions' lack of responsiveness to students experiencing homeless?

While many of youth in the study have become more stable since I interviewed them for my dissertation, several are still living in precarious conditions. Their current circumstances do not stem from lack of effort, but rather lack of opportunity. I cannot help but imagine what they and all students experiencing homelessness could and can do if given the necessary resources to thrive. For that to happen will take more than our public institutions. It will take us all.

APPENDIX

Sentences Using “Education” and “School”	Page Number	Policy Brief Topic	Context of the Passage	Department/Program Associated
Some of these barriers include: legal issues, the unwillingness of many employers to hire job applicants with a criminal background, the lack of identification documents needed for employment, substance use disorders, mental health issues, poor **education** and/or employment history and the lack of social skills necessary to obtain/maintain employment.	2	Employment	Background Information	N/A
Employment program for employable GR participants. Services include case management, early job search, job skills preparation class, **educational**/vocational training, and mental health and substance use disorder services.	4	Employment	Existing Resources	Department of Public Social Services
Employment Program for adults receiving CalWORKs benefits. Services include appraisal, orientation, motivation, job search, vocational assessment, **education** and training, work experience, subsidized employment, community service, family stabilization services, and mental health, domestic violence, and substance use disorder recovery services.	4	Employment	Existing Resources	Department of Public Social Services
Youth Programs prepare youth for **educational**	6	Employment	Existing Resources	Community and Senior Services

opportunities or employment by providing paid work experience during off-school periods and the summer.				(CSS) Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Programs
Summer Night Lights (Limited) The Summer Night Lights program provides extended recreational, cultural, **educational**, and resource-based programming on designated days between the hours of 7 P.M. and 11 P.M.… Additionally, the program partners with over 100 local community-based organizations, educational and vocational institutions, and City and County agencies.	6	Employment	Existing Resources	Summer Night Lights
Job Corps is a no cost **education** and career technical training program administered by the US Department of Labor that helps young people ages 16 through 24 improve the quality of their lives through career technical and academic training.	7	Employment	Existing Resources	Jobs Corps
Jericho Vocational Services Center provides comprehensive vocational, **educational** and support services to South Los Angeles residents, including ex-offenders returning to the community.	7	Employment	Existing Resources	Jericho Vocational Services Center
Adult **education** bridge programs connect participants to post-secondary education and training programs by equipping them with basic academic and English	13	Employment	Strategies	N/A

language skills. Bridge programs are condensed to make learning as efficient as possible and are flexibly scheduled to meet individual needs.				
Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) Independent Living Program (Significant)-Provides for housing and support to TAY in the areas of **education**, employment, life skills, and mental health.	6	Employment	Existing Resources	Department of Children and Family Services
Contextualized instruction and curriculum development are practices in the field of adult literacy and adult basic **education** that involve designing academic skills lessons using illustrations and materials that are relevant in the context of an adult learner's interests, employment goals, and everyday life.	13	Employment	Strategies	N/A
Sector based training and employment strategies engage multiple employers and other industry leaders in the development of industry-specific training programs linked to employment opportunities and workforce needs in a sector. This approach offers participants **education** and hands-on training to match in demand job openings in a specific occupation or industry sector.	14	Employment	Strategies	N/A
For those who are not able to find jobs right away, Work First provides additional activities geared toward addressing those	15	Employment	Strategies	N/A

factors which impeded employment. These activities might include **education**, training, or other options. These activities are generally short term, closely monitored, and either combined with or immediately followed by additional job search.				
Engaged and supportive employers are essential to the success of employment programs serving people experiencing homelessness. Strong partnerships among the public workforce system, **education** providers, and employers in key sectors appear to be critical for improving employment and earnings outcomes for workers.	15	Employment	Strategies	N/A
Los Angeles County could choose to offer the following benefits to beneficiaries experiencing substance use disorders…**Education** and job skills	57	Affordable Care Act	Strategies	N/A
The McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act signed into law in 1987 was the nation's first major legislative response to homelessness. It originally consisted of 15 programs providing a range of services to homeless people including: emergency shelter; transitional housing; job training; primary health care; **education**; and some permanent housing.	68	Coordination of Services	Background Information	N/A

How can County, city and community providers that serve homeless populations within their programs, but are constrained by program eligibility or funding requirements, coordinate more effectively to serve the multifaceted needs of homeless individuals in terms of health; mental health; SUD; housing; public benefits; vocational/**educational** services; legal needs; and life skills/money management?	79	Coordination of Services	Discussion Question	N/A
HIRE LA's Youth promotes employment opportunities for youth through partnerships with the City's business community to provide "first time" jobs for youth. HIRE LA's Youth recruits young people through local **schools**, the City's Workforce Development System, the Community College District, and community organizations.	7	Employment	Existing Resources	Hire LA
More than one-third of the projected openings for the next five years require workers without a high **school** diploma and no work experience.	11	Employment	Background Information	N/A

Table 35. Keyword Analysis of the County of Los Angeles Homeless "Compilation of Policy Briefs"

REFERENCES

Aviles, A. M. (2017). On the Conditions of Fragility: Homeless Education Policy, Accountability, and Researcher Reflections. *Education and Urban Society*, 001312451771778. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517717788

Aviles de Bradley, A. (2015a). *From Charity to Equity—Race, Homelessness, and Urban Schools*. Teachers College Press.

Aviles de Bradley, A. (2015b). Homeless Educational Policy: Exploring a Racialized Discourse Through a Critical Race Theory Lens. *Urban Education*, *50*(7), 839–869. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085914534861

Balfanz, R., & Byrnes, V. (2012). The Importance of Being in School: A Report on Absenteeism in the Nation's Public Schools. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review*, *78*(2), 4–9.

Baxter, E., & Hopper, K. (1981). *Private Lives/Public Spaces: Homeless Adults on the Streets of New York City*.

Berliner, D. C. (2009). *Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success*. 54.

Bertrand, M., & Mullainathan, S. (2004). Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination. *The American Economic Review*, *94*(4), 76.

Bishop, J. P., Gonzalez, L. C., & Rivera, E. (2020). *State of crisis: Dismantling student homelessness in California* (p. 87). Center for the Transformation of Schools, School of Education & Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles. https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.213/38e.a8b.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/CTS_state-of-crisis_report_FINAL_11.30_low-res.pdf

Bonilla-Silva, E. (1997). Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation. *American Sociological Review*, *62*(3), 465–480. https://doi.org/10.2307/2657316

Brubacher, S. P., Powell, M. B., Snow, P. C., Skouteris, H., & Manger, B. (2016). Guidelines for teachers to elicit detailed and accurate narrative accounts from children. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *63*, 83–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2016.02.018

Bryk, A. S., Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Easton, J. Q., & Luppescu, S. (2010). *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. University of Chicago Press.

Burt, M. R. (2001, October 1). *What Will It Take To End Homelessness?* [Text]. http://webarchive.urban.org/publications/310305.html

Carrasco, A. R. (2019). Youth homelessness and the racial knowledge gap. *Journal of Children and Poverty*, *25*(1), 57–68. https://doi.org/10.1080/10796126.2019.1591041

Chinchilla, M. (2019). *Stemming the Rise of Latino Homelessness:* (p. 24). UCLA Latino Policy & Politics Initiative. https://socialinnovation.usc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Melissa-Chinchilla-Stemming-the-Rise-of-Homelessness.pdf

Chow, K. A., Mistry, R. S., & Melchor, V. L. (2015). Homelessness in the elementary school classroom: Social and emotional consequences. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *28*(6), 641–662. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2015.1017855

Commission on Civil Rights. (1973). *Understanding Fair Housing*. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, Education Department. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED075565.pdf

Conley, D. (2010). *Being Black, Living in the Red: Race, Wealth, and Social Policy in America*. Univ of California Press.

Conroy, S. J., & Heer, D. M. (2003). Hidden Hispanic Homelessness in Los Angeles: The "Latino Paradox" Revisited. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, *25*(4), 530–538. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986303258126

Cowen, J. M. (2017). Who Are the Homeless? Student Mobility and Achievement in Michigan 2010–2013. *Educational Researcher*, *46*(1), 33–43. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X17694165

Cox, D. D. (2005). Evidence-Based Interventions Using Home-School Collaboration. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *20*(4), 473–497. https://doi.org/10.1521/scpq.2005.20.4.473

Delpit, L. D. (2006). *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. The New Press.

Desmond, M. (2016). *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. Crown/Archetype.

Desmond, M., An, W., Winkler, R., & Ferriss, T. (2013). Evicting Children. *Social Forces*, *92*(1), 303–327. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sot047

Dhaliwal, T. K., De Gregorio, S., Owens, A., & Painter, G. (2021). Putting Homelessness in Context: The Schools and Neighborhoods of Students Experiencing Homelessness. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *693*(1), 158–176. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716220987830

Dill, V. (2015). About a million homeless students live doubled-up. What's life like for them, and how can schools help? *Educational Leadership*, *72*(6), 42–47.

Durso, L. E., & Gates, G. J. (2012). *Serving Our Youth: Findings from a National Survey of Services Providers Working with Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth Who Are Homeless or At Risk of Becoming Homeless*. https://escholarship.org/uc/item/80x75033

Eagle, J. W., Dowd-Eagle, S. E., Snyder, A., & Holtzman, E. G. (2015). Implementing a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS): Collaboration Between School Psychologists and Administrators to Promote Systems-Level Change. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*, *25*(2–3), 160–177. https://doi.org/10.1080/10474412.2014.929960

Edwards, E. C., Edwards, E. J., & Howard, T. (2020). *Keeping students safe in Los Angeles: An analysis of LAUSD school incident reports & funding* (p. 6). UCLA Black Male Institute. https://blackmaleinstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Keeping-Students-Safe-in-Los-Angeles-Final-Version-Updated-6-24.pdf

Edwards, E. J. (2021). Who Are the Homeless? Centering Anti-Black Racism and the Consequences of Colorblind Homeless Policies. *Social Sciences*, *10*(9), 340. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci10090340

Fabelo, T., Thompson, M. D., Carmichael, D., Marchbanks III, M. P., & Booth, E. A. (2011). *Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement* (p. 124). Council of State Governments Justice Center.

Faber, J. W. (2013). Racial Dynamics of Subprime Mortgage Lending at the Peak. *Housing Policy Debate*, *23*(2), 328–349. https://doi.org/10.1080/10511482.2013.771788

Fantuzzo, J., LeBoeuf, W., Brumley, B., & Perlman, S. (2013). A Population-Based Inquiry of Homeless Episode Characteristics and Early Educational Well-Being. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *35*(6), 966–972. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2013.02.016

Fantuzzo, J. W., LeBoeuf, W. A., Chen, C.-C., Rouse, H. L., & Culhane, D. P. (2012). The Unique and Combined Effects of Homelessness and School Mobility on the Educational

Outcomes of Young Children. *Educational Researcher*, *41*(9), 393–402. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X12468210

Farkas, T., Joseph Bishop, James, A., Valencia, G. C., Sanchez, S., Liu, L., & Blanchard, S. (2021). *CA MTSS School-Site Implementation: Pilot Phase 2A*. Center for the Transformation of Schools, School of Education & Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles. https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.213/38e.a8b.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/CAMTSS_Pilot2A_BaselineSummary_FINAL.pdf

Flaming, D., Burns, P., & Carlen, J. (2018). *Escape Routes: Meta-Analysis of Homelessness in L.A.* Economic Roundtable. www.economicrt.org

Gaddis, S. M. (2015). Discrimination in the Credential Society: An Audit Study of Race and College Selectivity in the Labor Market. *Social Forces*, *93*(4), 1451–1479. https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sou111

Ghavami, N., Thornton, B. E., & Graham, S. (2021). School police officers' roles: The influence of social, developmental and historical contexts. *Journal of Criminal Justice*, *72*, 101724. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcrimjus.2020.101724

Goodall, J., & Montgomery, C. (2014). Parental involvement to parental engagement: A continuum. *Educational Review*, *66*(4), 399–410. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2013.781576

Gorzka, P. A. (1999). Homeless Parents'Perceptions of Parenting Stress. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, *12*(1), 7–16. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6171.1999.tb00036.x

Gotham, K. F. (2000). Racialization and the State: The Housing Act of 1934 and the Creation of the Federal Housing Administration. *Sociological Perspectives*, *43*(2), 291–317. https://doi.org/10.2307/1389798

Gregory, A., Skiba, R. J., & Noguera, P. A. (2010). The Achievement Gap and the Discipline Gap: Two Sides of the Same Coin? *Educational Researcher*, *39*(1), 59–68. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X09357621

Grothaus, T., Lorelle, S., Anderson, K., & Knight, J. (2011). Answering the Call: Facilitating Responsive Services for Students Experiencing Homelessness. *Professional School Counseling*, *14*(3), 191–201.

Hallett, R. E. (2012). Living Doubled-Up: Influence of Residential Environment on Educational Participation. *Education and Urban Society*, *44*(4), 371–391. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124510392778

Hallett, R. E., Low, J. A., & Skrla, L. (2015). Beyond backpacks and bus tokens: Next steps for a district homeless student initiative. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *28*(6), 693–713. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2015.1050898

Hallett, R. E., & Skrla, L. (2016). *Serving Students Who Are Homeless: A Resource Guide for Schools, Districts, and Educational Leaders*. Teachers College Press.

Hallett, R. E., Skrla, L., & Low, J. (2015). That is not what homeless is: A school district's journey toward serving homeless, doubled-up, and economically displaced children and youth. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *28*(6), 671–692. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2015.1017859

Harper, S. R. (2010). An anti-deficit achievement framework for research on students of color in STEM. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, *2010*(148), 63–74. https://doi.org/10.1002/ir.362

Harris-Dawson, M. (2017). *Homelessness in South Los Angeles: Position paper from Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson*. Los Angeles City Council. http://mhdcd8.com/issues/homelessness-and-poverty/

Harvey, B., Gupta-Kagan, J., & Church, C. (2021). Reimagining Schools' Role Outside the Family Regulation System. *Columbia Journal of Race and Law*, *11*(3), 575–610. https://doi.org/10.52214/cjrl.v11i3.8745

Hirschfield, P. (2009). Another Way Out: The Impact of Juvenile Arrests on High School Dropout. *Sociology of Education*, *82*(4), 368–393. https://doi.org/10.1177/003804070908200404

Holland, G., & Karlamangla, S. (2015, May 12). Homelessness up 12% in L.A. city and county. *Los Angeles Times*. https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-homeless-count-release-20150511-story.html

Hornby, G., & Lafaele, R. (2011). Barriers to parental involvement in education: An explanatory model. *Educational Review*, *63*(1), 37–52. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2010.488049

Howard, T. C. (2013). *Black Male(d): Peril and Promise in the Education of African American Males*. Teachers College Press.

Ingram, E. S., Bridgeland, J. M., Reed, B., & Atwell, M. (2017). *Hidden in Plain Sight: Homeless Students in America's Public Schools*. Civic Enterprises. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED572753

Irvine, J. J. (2010). *Culture, curriculum, and identity in education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Ivanich, J. D., & Warner, T. D. (2019). Seen or Unseen? The Role of Race in Police Contact among Homeless Youth. *Justice Quarterly*, *36*(5), 816–840. https://doi.org/10.1080/07418825.2018.1463389

Julianelle, P. F., & Foscarinis, M. (2003). Responding to the School Mobility of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness: The McKinney-Vento Act and Beyond. *The Journal of Negro Education*, *72*(1), 39–54. https://doi.org/10.2307/3211289

Kataoka, S., Langley, A., Wong, M., Baweja, S., & Stein, B. (2012). Responding to Students with PTSD in Schools. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, *21*(1), 119–x. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chc.2011.08.009

Katznelson, I. (2005). *When Affirmative Action was White: An Untold History of Racial Inequality in Twentieth-century America*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Kingsley, G. T., Robin Smith, & David Price. (2009). *The impacts of foreclosures on families and communities*. The Urban Institute.

Kozol, J. (1988). *Rachel and her Children: Homeless Familes in America* (1St Edition edition). Fawcett Columbine.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2006). From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in ... *Educational Researcher*, *35*(7), 3–12.

Lewis, K., & Burd-Sharps, S. (2018). *A Portrait of Los Angeles County 2017-2018*. Social Science Research Council. https://ssrc-static.s3.amazonaws.com/moa/PoLA%20Full%20Report.pdf

Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. (2021). *Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services Child Welfare Services Data Fact Sheet,*

Fiscal Year 2020-2021 (p. 1). Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services. https://dcfs.lacounty.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/DCFS-FACTSHEET-FY-2020-2021.pdf

Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. (2018). *Report and recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness* (p. 115). Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. https://www.lahsa.org/documents?id=2823-report-and-recommendations-of-the-ad-hoc-committee-on-black-people-experiencing-homelessness.pdf

Low, J. A., Hallett, R. E., & Mo, E. (2016). Doubled-Up Homeless: Comparing Educational Outcomes With Low-Income Students. *Education and Urban Society*, 0013124516659525. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124516659525

Ma, X., & Wilkins, J. L. M. (2007). Mathematics Coursework Regulates Growth in Mathematics Achievement. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, *38*(3), 230–257. https://doi.org/10.2307/30034867

Martin, A. J. (2010). *After Foreclosure: The Displacement Crisis and the Social and Spatial Reproduction of*. https://escholarship.org/content/qt3551q7sd/qt3551q7sd.pdf

Masten, A. S., Sesma, A., Si-Asar, R., Lawrence, C., Miliotis, D., & Dionne, J. A. (1997). Educational risks for children experiencing homelessness. *Journal of School Psychology*, *35*(1), 27–46. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0022-4405(96)00032-5

Mawhinney-Rhoads, L., & Stahler, G. (2006). Educational Policy and Reform for Homeless Students: An Overview. *Education and Urban Society*, *38*(3), 288–306. https://doi.org/10.1177/00131245062

86943

Mayberry, L. S., Shinn, M., Benton, J. G., & Wise, J. (2014). Families experiencing housing instability: The effects of housing programs on family routines and rituals. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, *84*(1), 95–109. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0098946

Milburn, N. G., Ayala, G., Rice, E., Batterham, P., & Rotheram-Borus, M. J. (2006). Discrimination and Exiting Homelessness among Homeless Adolescents. *Cultural Diversity & Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *12*(4), 658–672. https://doi.org/10.1037/1099-9809.12.4.658

Miller, P. M. (2009). Leadership Practice in Service of Homeless Students: An Examination of Community Perceptions. *The Urban Review*, *41*(3), 222–250. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-008-0107-9

Miller, P. M. (2011a). An Examination of the McKinney-Vento Act and Its Influence on the Homeless Education Situation. *Educational Policy*, *25*(3), 424–450. https://doi.org/10.1177/0895904809351692

Miller, P. M. (2011b). A Critical Analysis of the Research on Student Homelessness. *Review of Educational Research*, *81*(3), 308–337. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654311415120

Miller, P. M., & Schreiber, J. (2012). Multilevel Considerations of Family Homelessness and Schooling in the Recession Era. *Journal of School Leadership*, *22*.

Milner, H. R. (2012). Beyond a Test Score: Explaining Opportunity Gaps in Educational Practice. *Journal of Black Studies*, *43*(6), 693–718. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021934712442539

Milner, H. R. (2014). Studying and Addressing Homelessness in Urban Communities. *Urban Education*, *49*(1), 3–7. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085913517735

Mistry, R. S., Lowe, E. D., Benner, A. D., & Chien, N. (2008). Expanding the Family Economic Stress Model: Insights From a Mixed-Methods Approach. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *70*(1), 196–209. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2007.00471.x

Moore, J. (2005). *Collaborations of Schools and Social Service Agencies*. National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED491199

Morton, M. H., Dworsky, A., Matjasko, J. L., Curry, S. R., Schlueter, D., Chávez, R., & Farrell, A. F. (2018). Prevalence and Correlates of Youth Homelessness in the United States. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *62*(1), 14–21. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2017.10.006

Murphy, J. (2011). Homeless Children and Youth at Risk: The Educational Impact of Displacement. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR)*, *16*(1), 38–55. https://doi.org/10.1080/10824669.2011.554143

Murphy, J. F., & Tobin, K. J. (2011). Homelessness Comes to School. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *93*(3), 32–37. https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171109300308

National Center for Homeless Education. (2017). *National Center for Homeless Education Federal Data Summary School Years 2013-14 to 2015-16* (p. 36). University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2014). *Toxic Stress Disrupts Brain Architecture*. Harvard University. https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/wp3/

Newman, S. J., & Holupka, C. S. (2016). Is Timing Everything? Race, Homeownership and Net Worth in the Tumultuous 2000s. *Real Estate Economics*, *44*(2), 307–354. https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6229.12118

Nier, C. L. I., & St. Cyr, M. R. (2010). A Racial Financial Crisis: Rethinking the Theory of Reverse Redlining to Combat Predatory Lending under the Fair Housing Act. *Temple Law Review*, *83*, 941–978.

Noguera, P. A., & Alicea, J. A. (2021). The Role of Education in Reducing Racial Inequality: Possibilities for Change. In *Handbook of Urban Education* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Noguera, P., Bishop, J. P., Howard, T. C., & Johnson, S. (2019). *Beyond the Schoolhouse: Overcoming Challenges & Expanding Opportunities for Black Youth in Los Angeles County*. Center for the Transformation of Schools, Black Male Institute, Graduate School of Education & Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles. https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.213/38e.a8b.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/beyond-the-schoolhouse.pdf

NYS-TEACHS. (2018). *Data on Student Homelessness in NYS*. Advocates for Children of New York.

Oliver, M. L., & Shapiro, T. M. (2006). *Black Wealth, White Wealth: A New Perspective on Racial Inequality*. Taylor & Francis.

Olivet, J., Dones, M., Richard, M., Wilkey, C., Ymapolskaya, S., Beit-Arie, M., & Joseph, L. (2018). *SPARC Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities: Phase One Study*. Center for Social Innovation.

Olivet, J., Wilkey, C., Richard, M., Dones, M., Tripp, J., Beit-Arie, M., Yampolskaya, S., & Cannon, R. (2021). Racial Inequity and Homelessness: Findings from the SPARC Study. *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *693*(1), 82–100. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716221991040

Ong, P. M., & Gonzalez, S. R. (2019). *Uneven Urbanscape: Spatial Structures and Ethnoracial Inequality* (Illustrated edition). Cambridge University Press.

Ong, P. M., Pech, C., & Pfeiffer, D. (2013). The Foreclosure Crisis in Los Angeles. In *2013 California Policy Options* (p. 20). UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs.

Ong, P. M., & Stoll, M. A. (2007). Redlining or risk? A spatial analysis of auto insurance rates in Los Angeles. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *26*(4), 811–830. https://doi.org/10.1002/pam.20287

Pager, D., Western, B., & Sugie, N. (2009). Sequencing Disadvantage: Barriers to Employment Facing Young Black and White Men with Criminal Records. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, *623*(1), 195–213. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002716208330793

Pappas, L. (2018). *Not Reaching the Door: Homeless Students Face Many Hurdles on the Way to School* (p. 58). New York City Independent Budget Office. https://ibo.nyc.ny.us/iboreports/not-reaching-the-door-homeless-students-face-many-hurdles-on-the-way-to-school.pdf

Paul, D. W., Knight, K. R., Olsen, P., Weeks, J., Yen, I. H., & Kushel, M. B. (2020). Racial discrimination in the life course of older adults experiencing homelessness: Results from the HOPE HOME study. *Journal of Social Distress and Homelessness*, *29*(2), 184–193. https://doi.org/10.1080/10530789.2019.1702248

Pavlakis, A. E. (2014). Living and Learning at the Intersection: Student Homelessness and Complex Policy Environments. *The Urban Review*, *46*(3), 445–475. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-014-0287-4

Pavlakis, A. E. (2018a). Spaces, Places, and Policies: Contextualizing Student Homelessness. *Educational Researcher*, *47*(2), 134–141. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X17742645

Pavlakis, A. E. (2018b). Reaching All Families: Family, School, and Community Partnerships Amid Homelessness and High Mobility in an Urban District. *Urban Education*, *53*(8), 1043–1073. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085915613547

Pavlakis, A. E., & Duffield, B. (2017). The Politics of Policy in the McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Setting the Agenda for Students Experiencing Homelessness. *The Urban Review*, *49*(5), 805–831. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11256-017-0422-0

Piazza, A., & Hyatt, S. (2019). *Serving Students Hidden in Plain Sight*. ACLU Foundations of California.

Poland, S. (2010). Homeless youth in our schools. *District Administration*, *46*(3).

Powers-Costello, B., & Swick, K. J. (2011). Transforming Teacher Constructs of Children and Families Who Are Homeless. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *39*(3), 207–212. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-011-0455-z

Quillian, L., Pager, D., Hexel, O., & Midtbøen, A. H. (2017). Meta-analysis of field experiments shows no change in racial discrimination in hiring over time. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, *114*(41), 10870–10875. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1706255114

Robinson, S. R. (2018). Homeless Youth of Color and the Shaping of Aspirations: The (Re)productive Role of Institutions. *Urban Education*, 0042085918805802. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085918805802

Rothstein, R. (2017). *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. Liveright Publishing.

Saldana, J. (2015). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. SAGE.

Samuels, G. M., Cerven, C., Curry, S., Robinson, S., & Patel, S. (2018). *Missed Opportunities in Youth Pathways Through Homelessness*. Chaplin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Schlichtman, J. J., Patch, J., & Hill, M. L. (2017). *Gentrifier*. University of Toronto Press.

Sedlak, A. J., Mettenburg, J., Basena, M., Petta, I., McPherson, K., Greene, A., & Li, S. (2010). Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect (NIS–4): Report to Congress, Executive Summary. *Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families*. https://calio.dspacedirect.org/handle/11212/321

Smerillo, N. E., Reynolds, A. J., Temple, J. A., & Ou, S.-R. (2018). Chronic absence, eighth-grade achievement, and high school attainment in the Chicago Longitudinal Study. *Journal of School Psychology*, *67*, 163–178. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jsp.2017.11.001

Sulkowski, M. L., & Michael, K. (2014). Meeting the mental health needs of homeless students in schools: A Multi-Tiered System of Support framework. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *44*, 145–151. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2014.06.014

Tower, C. C., & White, D. J. (1989). *Homeless Students*. National Education Association Professional Library, P. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED311338

U.S. Conference of Mayors. (2016). *The U.S. Conference of Mayors' Report on Hunger and Homelessness*. United States Conference of Mayors. https://endhomelessness.atavist.com/mayorsreport2016

Wilder, S. (2014). Effects of parental involvement on academic achievement: A meta-synthesis. *Educational Review*, *66*(3), 377–397. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2013.780009

Yin, R. K. (2018). *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods—Robert K. Yin—Google Books* (6th ed.). SAGE Publications, Inc.