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The Invisible Population: The Lived Experiences of Homeless College Students

Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for

The Degree of Doctor of Education in

Educational Leadership in

The Donald E. and Helen L. Ross College of Education of

Lynn University

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Abstract

The Invisible Population: The Lived Experiences of Homeless College Students

The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of homeless college students and their perseverance to graduate. College students are the hidden homeless population. Many homeless students remain in college in hopes of changing their situation and obtaining a job that will provide stability and financial security. This study explored how despite being homeless the participants exhibited a high level of self-efficacy to graduate. The themes that emerged from this study are family conflicts, resilience, and the motivation to graduate. Although the experience of being homeless was different, the participants shared a commonality of experiencing some form of family conflicts, which included insufficient parental support, the participants exhibiting resiliency, and the motivation to graduate. The findings of this research indicate that the participants had to continue to work hard in their academics despite being homeless, he/she had to maintain a positive perception at all times, and there was someone influential in his/her life that made a significant difference. Recommendations for colleges and universities is to establish on-campus resources specifically for students identified as formerly in foster care or homeless. In addition to collaborating with outside social service organizations. Furthermore, colleges should help build student self-confidence and create a mentorship program. Future studies should explore a quantitative study on students who were homeless in college and persevere to graduation. Future study should also explore the actual level of self-efficacy of students who have experienced homelessness and persisted to graduation.

Acknowledgments

I must first acknowledge God for such an anointing, favor, and blessings that is on my life. I genuinely believe in Jeremiah 29:11 because it is by God's grace that I made it through this journey. I give all thanks and praise to my Lord and Savior because of his favor that I have accomplished this goal.

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genuineness because you have help to make this process come to fruition. I have grown immeasurably as a scholar because of your leadership. Thank you for agreeing to be part of my committee.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to God because it is because of God that this is possible. I am forever thankful to God for believing in me, and the double portion of blessings.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my parents Marcel Sainthilaire and Janine Pierre-Louis. Thank you for your unconditional love, compassion, providing, support, and instilling in me the importance of education. I am forever grateful to you two for believing in me, encouraging me to be successful, and expressing how proud you are of me. Thank you for encouraging me never to give up and always to strive to accomplish my goals.

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Chapter I

The Problem

Introduction

Imagine being a college student and homeless. Most homeless students can graduate college despite their situation. Some homeless students are not as fortunate to attend nor graduate from college. To understand the experiences of a homeless student is to hear their story directly from him/her. There are some similarities in the challenges that homeless students encounter. However, there are also differences. As a homeless person, a college student may encounter having to make tough decisions to survive. The decisions that a homeless college student will make can lead him/her astray, which can cause him/her to drop out of college or he/she can make positive decisions despite their situation and graduate from college. To get the most authentic experiences of a homeless college student would be to interview him/her. At Oklahoma City Community College, twelve journalism students were task with interviewing and writing about the lived experiences of homeless college students (Pozadas et al., 2017). Five homeless college students in the Oklahoma City area share their stories about their experiences. The common thread among the students is each “struggled to attend college while being homeless” (Pozadas et al., 2017). According to the interviews, “one student turned to crime, a second student quit college, the third student moved from place to place, the fourth student is trying to help, and the fifth student built a better life” (Pozadas et al., 2017). Sadly, one of the students had to drop out of college due to unforeseen circumstances. He is a former student at Heritage College in Oklahoma City. He encountered many problems such as growing up in a low-income family. He has experienced periods of homelessness. He was forced to join his

brother's gang. His mother kicked him out of the house when he revealed to his family that he is bisexual. Despite the challenges, he found refuge at a local church called First Unitarian Church that provides help to struggling LGBTQ youth (Pozadas et al., 2017). Eventually, he was able to return home, but his mother still disapproved of his sexuality (Pozadas et al., 2017). This student's experience of being homeless lead him to have to drop out of college. Whereas, one of the students remained in college while being homeless. She wanted a better life for herself and her daughter. Despite being homeless, she wanted to be a role model for daughter by continuing her pursuit of a college degree. She hoped that her dedication would show her daughter that she could also pursue higher education (Pozadas et al., 2017). The purpose of this study is to discover the resiliency of homeless college students to remain in school and earn their college degree.

College should be a time to explore yourself and your major. Being a college student is a time to grow intellectually and personally. College is a time to meet new people, and for some students, this is a chance to leave home and live in the dorms. Several students hope that a college degree will give him/her a good job after graduation. The whole college experience is slightly different for a homeless student. Each year more college-age young people are experiencing homelessness. Approximately, "over half a million people are homeless" (Quigley, 2017). Unfortunately, "one-quarter of homeless people are children," which is over 138,000 children under the age of eighteen (Quigley, 2017). In 2013, there were nearly 60,000 youths under the age of twenty-one who self-identified as homeless on the application for federal financial aid (Klitzman, 2018). The number of homeless applicants for federal financial aid over the age of twenty-one may likely be 100,000 (Klitzman, 2018).

Throughout the world, a common problem is homelessness. Homelessness does not target a particular group, race, and gender (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2018). According to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (2018), “The population who experiences homelessness is a heterogeneous group, and includes single individuals, families with children, and unaccompanied runaway and homeless youth.” Many people due to unforeseen circumstances can suffer from homelessness. Unfortunately, homelessness is a problem that can be hard to overcome without the right resources and help from individuals that can assist. There are numerous reasons for the cause of homelessness. For example, unemployment, leaving an abusive relationship, health problems, and an eviction (National Alliance to End Homelessness, n.d.). In the homeless population, college students are the forgotten group. According to Ehrmann (2017), “The few researchers who study the issue say there is scant data, but they believe a surprisingly large number of college students are homeless.” People would not assume that a college student would be homeless. The reality is that there are homeless college students on college campuses such as California State University (Xia, 2016). A study from California State University found that 8 percent to 12 percent of students are homeless, and 21 percent to 24 percent of students are food insecure (Xia, 2016). The study found, “about one in 10 of California State University's 460,000 students is homeless, and one in five doesn't have steady access to enough food (Xia, 2016).” Often a college student may not identify himself/herself as being homeless if he/she can temporarily live at a friend's or a relative's house. College students are the forgotten population because there is much more literature about homeless students who are in K-12. The housing challenges of youth in K-12 is well known and addressed (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2013). According to Wiltz (2017), “homeless youth are notoriously difficult to track.” College students “are the nation's invisible

homeless population” (Wiltz, 2017). For several years, homeless college students have been undercounted. Some students have to resort to “hiding out in cars and abandoned buildings, and in motels and on couches” (Wiltz, 2017). However, the available research reveals, “some students from low-income families are unable to pay their college costs without experiencing material hardship” (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2016). There is not an accurate number of homeless college students because many do not report that they are homeless (Harris, 2017). Therefore, there is minimal data on homeless college students (Kukulka, 2012).

The data available is based on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) when a student identifies as homeless on their application (Kukulka, 2012). Most homeless college students apply for FAFSA to cover the cost of their tuition. The method used by FAFSA to determine if a student is homeless is based on the student checking ‘yes’ to any of the homelessness-related questions (Kukulka, 2012). The FAFSA reports “include only a portion of applicants who might be homeless and should not be construed to be representative of the entire population of homeless applicants” (National Center for Homeless Youth, n.d.). For the application, the cycle of 2015-2016 for FAFSA there was a sum of 31,948 determined requests for homeless consideration (National Center for Homeless Youth, n.d.). There was an increase in the application cycle of 2016-2017, which there was a sum of 32,739 applicants determined request for homeless consideration (National Center for Homeless Youth, n.d.).

What is more alarming about the data of homeless college students is the “estimation of 58,000 college students across the nation” reported themselves as being homeless in the application cycle of 2012-2013 (Frick, 2015). There is a vast difference between the application cycle of 2012-2013 and 2016-2017, which could indicate that fewer students are reporting that

they are homeless. If fewer students are reporting that, he/she is homeless, and then it explains why homeless students are the invisible population on college campuses (Kukulka, 2012).

Due to the embarrassment attached to being homeless, many students will not seek help at their college. They are concerned that their friends and professors will find out about their lack of housing and food. Unfortunately, many people are not aware of the circumstances that lead a college student to be homeless (Frick, 2015). A college student can become homeless due to aging out of foster care, their parent(s) are unable to work due to an illness, and the student currently does not earn enough from a part-time job to support themselves financially (Frick, 2015). There is “a surprising number of students live at or near the poverty level” (Vollman, 2017). There should be major concerns about a college student being homeless (Chandler, 2017). The number of homeless college students is on the rise and although, “some universities have programs in place to help students in a housing crisis, most do not” (Chandler, 2017). Regardless of the age of the college student, there should be better assistance from the universities and government to provide housing assistance.

When a college student is homeless, the impact can cause a cascading spiral effect on their education. For instance, the student’s grades may suffer due to lack of studying, not completing assignments, the lack of concentration, and constant absence. If the student is not able to change their situation, he/she may have to make a difficult decision such as to withdraw from school. The chances of the student returning to school to earn their college degree may not seem favorable if their situation does not change. Often some students have to work two part-time jobs to support themselves or help their family. In the process, they neglect their studies. It takes a lot of perseverance to continue pursuing a college degree when a college student is homeless. A few are determined to continue their education despite being homeless because

they perceive the college degree as the answer to their problems. Throughout the United States, many college students are at the edge of being homeless (Chandler, 2017). One or two setbacks can completely change his/her life for the worse. For example, if a young adult abruptly runs away from their home and has nowhere to live, then he/she may end up living on the streets or at a shelter. When a youth age out of the foster care system without a place to live, and he/she do not have a job or a support system, then he/she may end up homeless. These young adults may lack the necessary skills to live independently. Without securing a well-paying job then he/she can struggle financially. It can become hard to recover back from a setback such as becoming unemployed when there is no money saved for unforeseen events. Another impediment is the lack of a reliable support system to provide assistance.

According to a national survey done by researchers at the University of Wisconsin the rates of hungry and homeless college students has risen across the country (Carapezza, 2017). The results of this survey found that “one-third of community college students go hungry and 14 percent are homeless” (Carapezza, 2017). Based on the results of the survey it revealed that food insecurity and housing insecurity is at both the community colleges and four years higher education institutions. There is an increasing number of students facing housing insecurity (Ashford, 2017).

At the University of Central Florida (UCF) advocates has been working towards documenting this invisible population to find better ways to serve students who are facing a financial crisis (Frick, 2015). Many people would not associate food insecurity and housing insecurity among college students. In actuality, it is a problem across college campuses (Vollman, 2017). According to “a 2015 survey of more than 33,000 community college students revealed that half of all respondents faced housing insecurity — with nearly 14 percent being

homeless — and 67 percent experienced food insecurity, meaning they were struggling to afford housing and food” (Vollman, 2017). Each year in the United States there is an increasing number of young people who will experience homelessness due to either being unaccompanied or their family has lost their home (Harris, 2017). In the 2015-2016 academic year, there were “32,000 college applicants that identified as an unaccompanied homeless youth on the federal student aid forms” (Harris, 2017). Many may want to attend college, but they face struggles of not having a place to live when the dormitories are closed during summer breaks, and paying for tuition. Often some parents are unable to help because they do not earn enough or they are unemployed. If the young adult can attend college, then they will seek federal aid to pay for their tuition. If the student can receive enough federal aid to cover the cost of housing, then he/she will live in the dormitories. However, during the breaks, they are unable to go home because there is not a home to go to during the break. If the college campus allows students to stay in their dormitories during the break, then this can be a solution. However, for some students staying in the dormitories all year round is not an option. Most homeless college students will either live in their cars, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, or couch surf (Harris, 2017).

Recent surveys indicate that homelessness and housing insecurity are problems faced by college students. In the fall of 2018, the #RealCollege administered a survey at all of the undergraduate campuses in the City University of New York (CUNY) system. Approximately 22,000 students participated in the survey. The result of the survey found, “Fifty-five percent of those surveyed were housing insecure in the previous year. Fourteen percent of those surveyed were homeless in the year preceding the survey’s administration” (Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, Coca, & Looker, 2019). Another survey administered in the fall of 2016 and 2018 at 57 schools

in the California Community College system. Nearly 40,000 students participated in the survey. The survey revealed, “Sixty percent of respondents were housing insecure in the previous year. Nineteen percent of respondents were homeless in the previous year” (Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, Coca, & Looker, 2019). In fall 2017, researchers administered a survey to students from 11 colleges and universities in Georgia. Approximately 8,127 students completed the survey. The researchers discovered, “Thirty-nine percent of Georgia students surveyed reported housing insecurity in the past year and 24% in the past month. Almost 9% of Georgia’s surveyed students experienced homelessness in the past year and 4.3% in the past month” (Goldrick-Rab, Baker-Smith, Coca, & Looker, 2018).

Problem statement

There is a hidden epidemic among college students who are homeless (Guillermo, 2017). Being homeless as a college student can be detrimental to his/her plans of earning a college degree. Individuals pursue a college degree in hopes of achieving a prosperous life. When a student is homeless, there is the pressure to survive to live on the streets and be academically successful in college. There are challenges that homeless college students face, but despite the barriers, many of them strive to change their situation. Most of them did not choose homelessness. People are not immune to homelessness because it can happen to anyone (Rich, 2017). There are fewer resources available for homeless college students, whereas “there are some structures in place to help homeless students in K-12” (Ross, 2012).

There are varying factors that can lead to homelessness (Miller, 2011). According to Miller (2011), “The most common causes of the various forms of homelessness are insufficient affordable housing and shortages of jobs that pay just wages.” The most common factor is poverty, which is a complex problem that can lead to homelessness (Home Aid America, n.d.).

The number of homeless college students continues to rise (Ross, 2012). However, this problem is invisible because of the lack of awareness about this issue. Most people assume that if someone was able to attend college, then they must not be homeless. There is little to no acknowledgment on most college campuses that this problem exists (Ashtari, 2017). According to Ashtari (2017), “Unlike the homeless population at large, homeless college students are largely indistinguishable from their peers.” Homeless college students are a challenging problem that college campuses cannot ignore. Most college campuses are not able to track the number of homeless students. Therefore, it is difficult to know the exact number of homeless students. Most students do not report that they are homeless.

College students are not obligated to report that they are homeless (Nguyen, 2016). Unfortunately, “most schools do not keep data on student homelessness” (Nguyen, 2016). Therefore, it is hard to meet the needs of this population when the students are not reporting their circumstances. It is a challenge to address this problem when students do not know where to get help on college campuses. There are no open dialogues on college campuses to inform students of the resources available to assist homeless students. Many homeless college students are not aware of resources that can assist them with their situation. It is difficult to know precisely the needs of a homeless student because they are not seeking help. The apparent need is that they need a place of residence. The available resources are usually for a temporary solution to the problem. College students becoming homeless will continue to grow as resources are not increasing or providing a permanent solution (Lam, 2017).

Statement of purpose

The purpose of this qualitative case study design was to discover the lived experience of homeless college students who have overcome this barrier to graduate from their university or

college. A resource guide will be created for homeless students and colleges to assist homeless students better. Although individuals may have some similarities, their experiences may be different. This research may provide an insight into the barriers, the academic challenges, and an overview of the life of a homeless college student. College students face many challenges, such as unstable housing and food insecurity (Silva et al., 2015). This study aimed to identify the resiliency of the students.

Moreover, the purpose of this qualitative case study was to understand the motivation piece and perseverance of a homeless college student to continue his/her pursuit of a college education. If the person is no longer homeless, this study aims to identify how the student persevered to graduation. There needs to be more awareness of homeless college students. Therefore, a set of solutions needs to be available in the form of a resource guide for college campuses to assist their homeless student population. The purpose of this research was to understand the experiences and allow homeless students and students who have graduated to have a voice.

Research questions

The study addressed questions to relate to the lived experiences of a homeless college student.

What is the lived experience of being a homeless college graduate?

What factors contribute to the homeless student graduating?

What resources were available at the college campus?

Were there influential persons that made an impact on the homeless college graduate, if so what was that impact?

Rationale and significance

There are limited quantitative and qualitative data on homeless college students (Gupton, 2017). According to Gupton (2017), “One group that has received little attention in the community college research literature is homeless youth.” Not much can be done to help this population when people are not aware of the issues associated with being homeless as a college student. There needs to be an understanding of homeless students who have persevered to graduation. Students should not be in class concerned about food and shelter. Putting this issue at the forefront on college campuses is essential. When the colleges, communities, and organizations are aware of this pivotal issue and some of the problem-solving solutions, then several services and resources can be created to help students who are on the verge of being homeless or who are currently homeless to assist them in persisting to graduation. This research is important because campus administrators need to be aware of what is happening on their campuses. The importance of administrators being aware of student homelessness is to create resources on campus. For example, year-round housing with residential life, and student food banks and pantries. Campus administrators need to be mindful of this issue because resources need to be set into place to assist homeless college students better. It is very fortunate that the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youths program is in existence for K-12 students. However, much more needs to be done beyond the 12th grade. The significance of this research is to bring awareness about college students being an invisible homeless population and to uncover how homeless students have persisted to graduation. When more people become aware of this population, then a lot more can be done to help these students. A student seeking a college degree should not be forced to choose between continuing their education and working at least two jobs to survive and delaying or quitting college.

Researcher assumptions

The first assumption is that all homeless people are unemployed. Many people tend to assume that when someone is homeless, they are also unemployed. The fact is some homeless people are employed and may work at least two jobs. Due to various reasons, they are unable to afford to pay rent. Although they are employed, they may only earn minimum wage, and they are unable to make ends meet. The second assumption is that all homeless people are uneducated. That is far from the truth. The reality is that there are current college students or are college graduates who have experienced homelessness. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) reported that there were 58,000 homeless college students nationwide (Benveniste, 2015). The third assumption is that there are no resources to help homeless college students. Many homeless college students may not be aware of the available resources. Some homeless students will not seek help because they are ashamed of their situation. Therefore, they become unaware of the resources that are available such as the program Housing First. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2016), "Housing First is a homeless assistance approach that prioritizes providing permanent housing to people experiencing homelessness, thus ending their homelessness and serving as a platform from which they can pursue personal goals and improve their quality of life." The purpose of this study is to address these assumptions to bring awareness about homeless college students and create a resource guide to aid homeless students.

Theoretical Framework

Albert Bandura: Self-Efficacy

According to Bandura (1994), "Self-efficacy beliefs determine how people feel, think, motivate themselves and behave. Such beliefs produce these various effects through four major

processes. They include cognitive, motivational, affective and selection processes.” Cognitive processes involve setting personal goals influenced by self-appraisal of capabilities (Bandura, 1994). Their attributions, goals, and interests can influence students.

Students need to believe in their capacities to carry out a specific task and achieve a specific goal. A student that is experiencing homelessness uses cognitive processes to set very high goals that are challenging, which will motivate him/her to be firm in their commitment to achieving the goals. For example, graduating from college can be a very high goal for a homeless student. Despite the many challenges that a homeless student may encounter, he/she is determined to graduate to change their situation. When a homeless college student does not have federal aid or any means to pay their tuition, then it can become challenging to graduate from college. If their financial aid is limited, then he/she is unable to purchase textbooks. Without reliable transportation, it can be difficult to get to school. When a homeless student is unable to eat a nutritional meal, he/she can lack focus in school. When a student has gained a stronger sense of self-efficacy even through these challenges they can persevere to earn their college degree. When someone has “a high sense of efficacy, visualize success scenarios that provide positive guides and supports for performance (Bandura, 1994).” Motivational processes are governed by “self-satisfying and self-dissatisfying reactions to one's performance, perceived self-efficacy for goal attainment, and readjustment of personal goals based on one's progress (Bandura, 1994).” What this means is that students should be encouraged to compare their progress and achievements with their past performance, and not with other students.

According to Bandura (n.d), “Among the mechanisms of human agency, none is more central or pervasive than people's beliefs in their efficacy to influence events that affect their lives. This core belief is the foundation of personal inspiration, motivation, performance

accomplishments, and emotional well-being.” For this study, the researcher seeks to understand a person’s positive self-belief while experiencing homelessness. Through resiliency, the person can gain the skills necessary to perform a new and difficult task to cope with changes in their lives. When the person is experiencing homelessness, he/she can perceive self-efficacy to facilitate setting goals to change their situation. For example, the person will seek to make an effort, invest their time, and become persistent in overcoming their obstacles. Their primary goal is to recover from disappointments and failures. A homeless college student may have a different outlook on earning a college degree than the person who has not experienced homelessness. The homeless college student may have a much-needed desire to earn a college degree in hopes of changing their situation. A homeless college student who is resilient may discover proactive ways to handle stressful factors associated with being homeless. They have found the ability to cope with their circumstances and deal with unexpected events. This whole notion of being optimistic while experiencing homelessness is based on Bandura’s theory about self-efficacy that anyone has “the ability to exercise and strengthen their self-efficacy” regardless of their past or present environment (Buchanan, 2016).

According to Stajkovic et al. (2018), “Self-efficacy is the focal determinant of functional adaptation in this theory for it affects outcomes both directly and by influencing other intrapersonal factors such as goals, outcome expectations, and self-evaluate reactions to one’s behavior and resulting outcomes.” In essence, a homeless college student can approach self-efficacy by setting realistic goals to overcome challenges, treat each failure as a learning opportunity, and surround his/her self with people who have overcome adversity for motivation.

Definition of key terminology

Following are definitions of key terms that will be used in this study.

Homeless – A homeless individual is defined in section 330(h)(5)(A) as an individual who lacks housing (without regard to whether the individual is a member of a family), including an individual whose primary residence during the night is a supervised public or private facility (e.g., shelters) that provides temporary living accommodations, and an individual who is a resident in transitional housing (National Healthcare for the Homeless Council, n.d.)

College student – A student enrolled in a college or university (Vocabulary, n.d.).

Organization of the dissertation

Chapter two of this dissertation will be the literature review. Chapter two will include a review of the literature on topics such as economic inequality, what are the causes of homelessness, and homeless college students. Chapter three is the methodology, which will provide a rationale for the qualitative approach. Chapter four will report the main findings and results of this research and assist in creating a guide of resources to assist college student centers and dean of students. Chapter five will discuss the synthesis, conclusions, and recommendations.

Summary

For many young adults, college is supposed to be a time to explore personal interest(s) and passion. College is a time to discover yourself and potential. For some students, college is a different experience because they are homeless. Homeless college students are concerned about housing and food. For many homeless students earning a college degree is the gateway to a

better job. Typically, people are not aware of the challenges that homeless college students experience. Through a qualitative research design, this study will explore the lived experience of homeless college students and how they have persisted to graduation.

Chapter II

Literature review

Introduction

Homelessness continues to be a growing epidemic since emerging as a national issue in America in 1640 (Fischer, 2011). In the 1640s, homelessness was perceived as a character flaw and a moral deficiency (Fischer, 2011). At that time, people perceived that a good Christian would have their needs met by God unless the person was outside of God's grace (Fischer, 2011). If the person was not under God's grace, then it was perceived that this person deserved their plight (Fischer, 2011). As time has progressed, there have been many factors associated with someone or a family becoming homeless. For example, The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 and The Great Depression were factors that caused homelessness for the people that were affected. The Great Mississippi Flood of 1927 affected more than 640,000 in the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, which caused several people to become homeless (Coyle, n.d.). Unfortunately, more than 700,000 were left homeless by the massive flood (Coyle, n.d.). Subsequently, hundreds of thousands of African Americans who were living along the Lower Mississippi River were displaced from their homes and had to live in relief camps (Coyle, n.d.). During the Great Depression of the 1930s, several people worldwide encountered homelessness, hunger, and poverty. The Great Depression had devastating effects that affected many people in the United States. During that time, the unemployment rate in the United States was on the rise. As a result, poverty-struck many families. The most common cause of homelessness is poverty. In recent years, a natural disaster has been a contributing factor to homelessness (Global Citizens, 2017). Some students struggle to afford food, housing, and transportation (Kamenetz, 2017). It can become especially hard when a natural disaster occurs (Kamenetz, 2017).

Hurricane Harvey is a prime example of a natural disaster that caused many people to become homeless including students. Some students have to grasp with the “possibility that their childhood homes are destroyed” (Watkins, 2017). When Hurricane Harvey struck Houston, Texas, “It is estimated that nearly a third of all Texas college students, or half a million, were affected in some way by Harvey. Houston Community College alone has about 70,000 students (Kamenetz, 2017).”

Income Inequality

In some aspects, everyone hopes to accomplish the American dream. The American dream may mean different things to people. For some people, the American dream may be to have a good job, own a house, and to be financially secure. It can become hard to accomplish those dreams when there is income inequality. Income Inequality is defined as “the unequal distribution of household or individual income across the various participants in an economy” (Income Inequality, 2015). Some people would argue that there is an unfair income distribution between the wealthy and everyone else. Many would speculate that the rich will become richer. Whereas, the poor will continue to be poor. According to a study done by economists Emmanuel Saez (2016), “income inequality remains extremely high. As top incomes have grown faster than middle and bottom incomes, top income shares have continued to increase in 2015 relative to 2014”. Unfortunately, in the past few decades income inequality has increased significantly. There are different factors associated with the cause of income inequality. It is not a secret that people earn different wages. People without an education beyond high school could rely on their skills to get a job; however skills demands have increased across the economy; thus opportunities for good jobs are disappearing (Matthews, 2017). According to Leung (2015), “Wages are a function of the market price of skills required for a job. In a free market, the “market price of a

skill” is determined by market demand and market supply.” Companies are in constant competition to hire the top candidates. As a result, there is an unequal distribution of salary. Some companies are willing to pay top salaries to have top talents at their company. Top executives continue to earn high salaries, which include big bonuses and incentives. Whereas, middle to lower level employees typically does not receive an increase in their salary. Some employees barely earn the minimum wage.

Education is a contributing factor to income inequality. There is a direct relationship between higher education and income inequality because college graduates earn more money than people with a high school diploma or less (Matthews, 2017). A college degree is supposed to assure that people have a chance to move up the economic ladder; thus, someone can avoid being locked in inequality (Matthews, 2017). However, “economic mobility in the United States is now below that of most developed countries, suggesting the American Dream is becoming a myth” (Matthews, 2017). According to Broton and Goldrick-Rab (2018), “Income disparities in college attainment persist even among students academically prepared for college. One reason is the high price of college.” It is apparent that people with different educational backgrounds will earn different wages. The level of education that someone has acquired will reflect on the skills he/she have obtained. The higher educational level that someone has acquired often means that they have advanced skills, which justifies earning a higher wage. Typically, low-income households consist of individuals who are either unemployed or underemployed. This problem is usually due to limited education, challenging labor market, or a criminal record. Although they are employed, it can be hard to overcome being part of the low-income population when the wages have been stagnant. The cost of housing continues to be expensive, and many people are unable to afford to pay rent due to their low wages. Therefore, many people are at risk of

becoming homeless. According to Amadeo (2018), “One-quarter of American workers makes less than \$10 per hour”. A family of four earning less than \$10 per hour is below the poverty level. In this scenario, it is likely that they do not have health insurance and likely to be struggling financially. According to Bond Hill (2015), “Getting access to higher education increases income mobility for lower-income students, but access to higher education is difficult for low-income families and the gap between rich and poor is increasing. Students from low-income families are less likely to go to college and less likely to graduate.”

Educational Rights

Young adults who have experienced chronic homelessness or chronic poverty are still able to attend college (Silva et al., 2015). However, “there is federal legislation enacted to support students through high school graduation, limited safeguards are in place for students attending postsecondary education” (Hallett, 2010). Education is a powerful tool that can help an individual to achieve their highest potential (Nkuranga, 2017). According to Duncan (2013), “Education is the key to eliminating gender inequality, to reducing poverty, to creating a sustainable planet, to preventing needless deaths and illness, and to fostering peace. And in a knowledge economy, education is the new currency by which nations maintain economic competitiveness and global prosperity.” The more education someone pursues, the better his or her chances of securing a job that pays above the minimum wage. Education plays a pivotal role in the lives of children (Nkuranga, 2017). It is the right of every child to have a good education regardless of his/her parent’s socioeconomic status. Homeless children face many barriers that can become a negative impact to them succeeding in school. Although a child or young adult may be homeless, it does not mean that they cannot learn. For some homeless children and young adults, education is viewed as the solution to get them out of their situation. Therefore, a

child should not be denied the chance to attend school because they are homeless. Laws have been set into place to assure that homeless children can attend school. In 2016, The U.S. Department of Education released new provisions in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) for supporting homeless youth. The new provisions of the ESSA “address the needs of homeless individuals and ensure educational rights and protections for homeless children and youth” (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Furthermore, the guidance may “assist state and local partners in understanding and implementing the new law to protect better and serve homeless students and help schools in providing these students with much-needed stability, safety, and support” (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). It is estimated that “during the 2013-14 school year, more than 1.3 million homeless children and youth were enrolled in public schools” (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). In some cases of students, experiencing homelessness may have lower school achievements. There is a higher risk of homeless students dropping out of school. Homeless students often attend many different schools. Therefore, it becomes challenging to be academically successful. The guidance will offer homeless students “technical assistance on promising practices for helping homeless youth through the implementation of homeless education requirements at the State and local levels, focusing particular attention on changes under ESSA” (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Moreover, the guidance will provide, “school districts across the country with critical tools and resources to increase the educational success of homeless children and youths from preschool to higher education,” (U.S. Education Department of Education, 2016).

According to a national survey by Voices of Youth Count (2018), “one in 10 young adults ages 18-25 and at least one in 30 adolescents ages 13-17, experience some form of

homelessness unaccompanied by a parent or guardian throughout a year.” Often, homeless families with children may temporarily live with family or friends; they may live in shelters, or on the streets. Therefore, it is sometimes a problem enrolling and participating in school (Education of Homeless Children, 2011). In response to aiding homeless students, Congress passed the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in 1987.

Unaccompanied Youth and McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The National Center for Homeless Education (2017), defines homeless children and youth as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” The McKinney-Vento Act defines unaccompanied youth as, “a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian” (National Center for Homeless Education, 2017). According to the National Center for Homeless Education (2017), “Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, reauthorized in 2015 by Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.; hereafter the McKinney-Vento Act), guarantees educational rights and supports for students experiencing homelessness, including specific supports for unaccompanied youth.” The purpose of the McKinney-Vento Act is to ensure that homeless students are not denied access to education. Under the McKinney-Vento Act in most states, there are no age requirements to qualify as unaccompanied youth. Therefore, a child or youth is eligible for K-12 public education and identified as unaccompanied youth. In some states, the age limit to enroll in K-12 public education is 21 (National Center for Homeless Education, 2017). Under the McKinney-Vento Act, unaccompanied, homeless youth are allowed to enroll in school immediately. Therefore, schools may not impede enrollment upon the receipt of proof of legal guardianship by caregivers of unaccompanied homeless youth (National Center for Homeless Education, 2017). In the school year, 2013-2014 there was

88,966 enrolled unaccompanied homeless youth (National Center for Homeless Education, 2017). In the school year, 2014-2015 there was 95,032 enrolled unaccompanied homeless youth (National Center for Homeless Education, 2017). In the school year, 2015-2016 there was 111,708 registered unaccompanied homeless youth (National Center for Homeless Education, 2017). Based on key findings, “unaccompanied youth make up 10% or more of the homeless student population in 20 states” (National Center for Homeless Education, 2017).

Homelessness is a challenging and devastating experience for any youth. The stresses associated with being homeless is especially hard for youth. A youth dealing with homelessness on his/her own is at risk of failing school or dropping out of school. For several unaccompanied youths, dysfunction is the primary reason he/she left their family home. Family dysfunction issues are either substance abuse, teen pregnancy, or sexual orientation. Several foster care youths end up homeless because he/she ran away from a foster care placement or aged out of the foster care system. Unaccompanied youth encounter numerous barriers enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. Examples of barriers include, “lack of safe and stable housing; lack of basic needs, including food and medical care, resulting in hunger, fatigue, and poor health; and lack of access to school records and other paperwork” (National Center for Homeless Education, 2017).

Homeless Young Adults and Higher Education

A study by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago revealed, “one in 10 young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 experience some form of homelessness throughout a year” (Brown, 2017). Higher education is a pathway that will lead to better opportunities apart from poverty. The majority of well-paying careers requires earning a college degree. Young adults can face barriers to attending college without financial aid. Young adults will need to apply for

FAFSA. It is unlikely that a homeless young adult will be able to afford the cost of postsecondary education without federal student aid. In September 2007, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA) passed into law to provide more access to financial aid and programs (The Institute for College Access & Success, n.d.). Under CCRAA, unaccompanied homeless youth qualify as “independent students” for the FAFSA application (National Center for Homeless Education, 2012). In August 2008, the Higher Education Opportunity Act was passed into law, which “contains numerous provisions to increase homeless and foster students’ access to postsecondary education” (National Association, n.d.).

Homeless College Students

According to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) data, there were 58,000 homeless college students in America in the academic year of 2012-2013 (Ashtari, 2014). However, this figure does not include students who did not report that they are homeless or students who do not realize that they qualify as being homeless. Typically, when a student does not report their homelessness status is due to fear or shame (Ashtari, 2014). An example, of a student that qualifies as being homeless, are usually couch-surfers (Ashtari, 2014). Still, today colleges and universities are not required to keep track of homeless students at the institution (Gupton, 2017). As a result, the homeless student population may be much larger than reflected in FAFSA data (Gupton, 2017). The FAFSA data has been the resource to provide some indication of how many homeless students are in higher education (Gupton, 2017). According to FAFSA (n.d.), “A student is considered homeless if he or she lacks fixed, regular, and adequate housing. The form of homelessness includes students who are living in shelters, motels, cars, or parks, or who are temporarily living with other people because they have nowhere else to go.” A student is considered homeless if they are fleeing an abusive parent(s) (FAFSA, n.d.). When a

student flees an abusive parent(s) then it is most likely they would not receive financial support and a place to live from his/her parent. If the parent refuses to provide their information for the student's FAFSA form then "the application will be considered rejected, and the student might not be able to receive any federal student aid" (Federal Student Aid, n.d.).

Furthermore, according to FAFSA (n.d.), "students who are 22 and 23 years old who are unaccompanied and homeless or self-supporting and at risk of becoming homeless qualify for a dependency override." To determine a youth homelessness status is on a case-by-case basis (FAFSA, n.d.). As stated by the National Alliance to End Homelessness there are "approximately 150,000 unaccompanied youth and young adults between the ages of 18 and 24 experience an episode of homelessness each year" (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2012).

It is unfortunate that college homelessness is often overlooked, but it is a serious issue (Ellis, 2013). For many people, they are more focused on meeting their basic needs like food and shelter. Therefore, pursuing an education may be farthest from their mind. However, for many homeless college students pursuing a college is the answer to their problem. There is an assumption that if you are poor or homeless, then education would be the least of your concern (Ellis, 2013). However, education has become the answer to many homeless youths because they know that without a degree they are likely to get a job with low wages (Ellis, 2013). Many believe that education is the only way out of their situation (Ellis, 2013). According to O'Dowd (2017), "the research on homelessness on college campuses is relatively scarce, and most government resources go to younger children and students in high school." It is disappointing, but "this population is very invisible" (O'Dowd, 2017). A few college students will not admit openly and "identify themselves as homeless" (O'Dowd, 2017).

Housing Insecurity. It is unfortunate that there are students in higher education experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. Housing insecurity affects a significant number of students across the United States in a variety of higher education institutions (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018). In certain cases, students who deal with food insecurity also encounter housing insecurity. For some students dealing with homelessness can become a barrier to achieving academic success. If a student is unable to pay for rent and utilities, then there is a chance that the student is unable to buy textbooks. If a student is homeless, then there is a chance that they will often miss classes or drop out of college. As a result of dealing with housing insecurity, this can harm a student's educational effort to earn a degree. Studies have found that students who struggle with housing insecurity are at risk of dropping out of college (Cole Pike, 2018). North Carolina State University conducted a survey that found that 30 days before the survey 3.5 students were homeless and 9.6 students were homeless over the prior year (Cole Pike, 2018). A few students reported that during their experience of being homeless he/she would live either outdoors or at a friend's place (Cole Pike, 2018). A study published in *Hunger on Campus* found, "Sixty-four percent of food insecure students reported experiencing some housing insecurity (Dubick, Mathews, & Cady, 2016)." The study also found, "Housing insecurity is greater at community colleges, where 13 percent of all respondents (regardless of food insecurity) experienced homelessness, compared to seven percent at four-year schools (Dubick, Mathews, & Cady, 2016)."

According to Vakil (2018), "Housing insecurity – including homelessness, difficulty paying rent or utilities, or having to move multiple times – is an issue for students in colleges across the country, including the 23 campuses of the California State University system." Many students are not able to meet their basic needs such as buying food. Often, financial aid does not

cover the cost of those needs. In California, affordable housing is becoming less available (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018). According to a California State University survey, “Overall, 10.9% (n=2,661) of CSU students reported being homeless (n=24,324) (Crutchfield & Maguire, 2018).” A study published in *Educational Researcher* found, “At least one-third of students at two-year colleges and 11 percent to 19 percent of students at four-year schools face housing insecurity (Vakil, 2018).” Students enrolled in a 2-year college are more likely to report their challenges with housing insecurity than students attending 4-year colleges (Brotton & Goldrick-Rab, 2018). According to a survey study by Brotton and Goldrick-Rab (2018), “community college students reported the most common challenges to include difficulty or an inability to pay the full amount of rent/mortgage and an inability to pay the full utility bill.”

Food insecurity. A new report from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) found that millions of college students are experiencing food insecurity. GAO conducted a review of thirty-one studies and found that “twenty-two of those thirty-one studies estimate that more than 30 percent of students are food insecure” (Harris, 2019). According to The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) (2018), food insecurity is defined “as a lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life.” Across the country, hunger is becoming a pervasive problem as millions of college students are going hungry (United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, 2018). As the cost of college tuition continues to climb, many students are at risk of being food insecure. A student who is experiencing food insecurity is unable to have access to nutritious and affordable food, which puts him/her at risk to drop out of college (Harris, 2019). Researchers have found that there is a link between food insecurity and lower graduation rates (Tatter, 2018). Food insecurity is a major deterrent to students’ academic success because it significantly affects a student’s educational attainment

(Blumenthal & Chu, 2018). The challenge that some low-income students encounter is the ability to function (Tatter, 2018). Experiencing long periods without food may have academic, emotional, and physical effects on students. In some cases, these effects may prevent some students from completing their college degree.

Unfortunately, across college campuses, many students struggle with food insecurity. The reality for some students is that they do not know when they will have their next meal. The challenges for some low-income students is the struggle to feed themselves during the times that the dining halls are closed over the vacation periods. Anthony Jack, a Harvard Graduate School of Education professor, “led a successful push in 2015 to keep dining halls at Harvard open over spring break” (Tatter, 2018). From his own experience as an undergraduate student at Amherst College, he encountered the dining halls were closed over the breaks, and he could not afford to go home. Jack understood the experiences of low-income students would face even at the nation’s wealthiest institutions. Although a one-size-fits-all solution may not be feasible for all colleges and universities, however, to help reduce food insecurity on college campuses, “dining halls can remain open during breaks, subsidizing unlimited meal plans, and facilitating “swipe sharing” among students — where wealthier students can donate some of their meal swipes to their peers” (Tatter, 2018).

Institutional Response to Homelessness

A national survey by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago found that there is a significant number of college students experiencing homelessness. According to the national study, “4.2 million youth and young adults experienced homelessness on their own during 12 months. This number includes 3.5 million young adults between the ages of 18-25” (Morton, Dworsky, & Samuels, 2017). Also, the study also found, “29% of young adults who experienced

homelessness were enrolled in college or another educational program at the time that they experienced homelessness” (Morton, Dworsky, & Samuels, 2017). Most higher education institutions such as Florida State University, Kennesaw State University, and West Chester University are addressing the issue of student homelessness on their campus by continually monitoring low-income, first-generation, and homeless students; pay the housing cost for homeless students, and keeping the dormitories open year-round.

Florida State University (FSU). Through the Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (CARE), FSU works with local school districts to identify low-income, first-generation or homeless students accepted to their university to monitor these students during their time at FSU. Students who have applied to CARE will be admitted to Florida State University under alternative admissions regardless if the applicant has “lower test scores and GPAs than the traditionally admitted student, if CARE accepts the student, FSU automatically will grant admission” (National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE, 2015). Students receive scholarships and other miscellaneous support from CARE.

Kennesaw State University (KSU). The dormitories at KSU remains open year-round except for about two weeks “in the summer right before the fall semester starts, when they close for cleaning” (Bauer-Wolf, 2019). The cost of housing includes winter break, and the students are allowed to stay in the dormitories except for the two weeks the dormitories are closed in the summer. KSU has four “emergency” apartments set up if students need housing over winter break. The Campus Awareness, Resource, and Empowerment Center (CARE Center) provide services for students who are experiencing food insecurity, homelessness or formerly part of foster care. CARE Center runs a large food pantry at KSU, which students are allowed to shop at the food pantry once a month or frequently with the approval of a case manager.

West Chester University (WCU). Through the Promise Program, it provides support to homeless students by paying for their housing year-round including winter. The WCU Promise Program also provides “food and supplies from the Resource Pantry, monthly dinners that provide mentorship and a safe space to share successes and challenges” (McDonald, 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Individuals with a high sense of efficacy are more likely to take on difficult tasks. These individuals are motivated to challenge themselves and put forth the maximum effort. A homeless college student with a high sense of efficacy will commit to excel despite their struggles. Homelessness is a challenging problem. Therefore, students with a high sense of efficacy will find solutions to recover from their setbacks. Epel, Bandura, and Zimbardo (1999) conducted a study, which the results found that “participants with high self-efficacy searched more for housing and employment and stayed at the shelter for a shorter duration, whereas participants with low self- efficacy were more likely to request an extension of their stay at the shelter. Those high on future orientation had shorter durations of homelessness and were more likely to enroll in school and to report gaining positive benefits from their predicament. Whereas, those with a present high orientation had more avoidant coping strategies.”

Summary

A college student experiencing homelessness is more likely experiencing food insecurity in addition to not being able to meet their basic needs. Homeless students come from varied backgrounds. The youth homeless population in higher education consist of students who enrolled in school while homeless and those that became homeless while in attendance. This study explored the lived experiences of homeless college students who were resolute to graduate

from college. Students with high self-efficacy are more likely to graduate despite being homeless. Through their resiliency, a student will try to remain motivated during his/her challenges of being homeless.

Chapter III

Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of former or current homeless college students and their perseverance to graduation. Moreover, the purpose of this study is to identify solutions and provide recommendations. This study aimed to bring awareness about this group of the homeless population. This study implemented a case study of qualitative design. This chapter provides an overview of the rationale for qualitative case study design, the research setting/context, data collection methods, instrumentation, trustworthiness/ethical considerations, and limitation/delimitations.

Research Questions

What is the lived experience of being a homeless college graduate?

What factors contribute to the homeless student graduating?

What resources were available at the college campus?

Were there influential persons that made an impact on the homeless college graduate, if so what was that impact?

The rationale for case study research approach

The purpose of a case study qualitative approach is to understand the experiences of homeless college students and their perseverance to graduation. The qualitative approach is a suitable approach to conduct an in-depth face-to-face interview with the participants. Qualitative research is ideal for this study because “qualitative” methods are used to answer questions about

experience, meaning, and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant (Hammarberg, Kirkman, & de Lacey, 2016).” Moreover, the data collected is qualitative because the information obtained from the participants are their personal histories and experiences. The case study design allows the researcher to make meaning of the research.

Research setting/context

Site Selection. For this study, a Miami-based non-profit organization was the recruitment site for recruiting participants as well as other universities in South Florida. The non-profit organization helps foster youth, adopted, and homeless college students achieve independence through education, mentoring, and life skills training. This organization provides individualized coaching to improve “academics, economic stability, access to stable and affordable housing, and physical/emotional well-being” (Our Work, n.d.). Various public and private university dean of students were sent recruitment flyers to send to potential participants of whom they are aware.

Participant Selection. The target population for this study was current or former students who have experienced homelessness and have graduated. The eligibility criteria for this study were as follows: (1) 18 years of age or older; (2) a current or former college student; (3) has experienced homelessness; and (4) has graduated from college.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher sought to understand the lived experiences of homeless college students and their perseverance to graduation. As an educator, the researcher interacts with a diverse group of students at her work site. The researcher attempted to discover which demographic group are homeless. The researcher wanted to know about the invisible population on college

campuses. People typically never discussed that there are homeless college students. Like many other people, the researcher never associated homelessness among college students. The researcher sought to discover why college students are the hidden population. The researcher assumed that if a student can attend college, then he/she should not be homeless. Although, the researcher understands that some students may struggle financially, but not to the extreme of being homeless. The researcher sought to change any bias thoughts about homeless college students. The researcher was empathic to the students' stories and acknowledged their perseverance.

Instrumentation

The instrumentation used in this study will consist of eight semi-structured questions that lead the way for the interviews.

1. What factors contributed to you graduating in spite of your homelessness?
2. What are the barriers did you experienced as a homeless college student?
3. What are the academic challenges that you encountered?
4. What resources are available at your college campus to assist homeless students?
5. What was/is your experience in getting assistance for housing on and off campus?
6. Were there any individuals that were key or impactful in your graduation success, if so, explain that experience.
7. Did you experience homelessness while in K-12, if so briefly explain that experience?
8. What perceptions did you have about yourself as someone experiencing homelessness?

Before the interviews were conducted, the participants received an Informed Consent form that explained what the researcher was studying and for the participants to sign if they felt

comfortable moving forward with the interview. When the participants signed the Informed Consent form, they agreed to participate in the interview. If the participant became uncomfortable or stressed he/she could ask for the audio to be stopped, the researcher would stop the interview, there would be no consequences to the participant, and the audio tape would be destroyed.

Data collection methods

Data collection occurred through individualized audiotaped semi-structured interviews with students who have experienced homelessness and have persevered to graduate. The recruitment of participants consisted of being in contact with a Miami-based non-profit organization that provides assistance to foster youth, adopted and homeless college students as well as other public and private universities. The researcher received assistance from the organization's Program Coordinator to forward emails (Appendix A) and flyers (Appendix B) to potential participants. Students were asked to contact the researcher if he/she wishes to participate in this study. Students who have expressed interest in the study received a follow-up phone call as a reminder for the interview. The students received a \$25 gift card as an incentive for their participation. The students are not limited to how he/she may use the gift card. The researcher personally purchased the \$25 gifts cards. The researcher purchased ten gift cards. Two digital recorders and an iPad voice recorder were used to record the interviews.

Data Analysis

The researcher analyzed the interviews by listening to digital recordings and transcribing onto word documents. The interviews are transcribed for identifying recurring themes, patterns, and categories (Wargo, 2013). The participants received a copy of the transcription to check

whether what he/she said is transcribed accurately. If a participant disagrees with the transcribed interview, then the researcher made the necessary changes to assure accuracy. After each interview the researcher journal about the interview, documenting impressions, observations, and noting participants' non-verbal actions.

Issues of trustworthiness/Ethical Considerations

A pseudonym is used to protect the identities of the participants to keep them confidential. The researcher is the only person that will have access to the digital recordings, informed consents, and transcription data. The digital recordings and data will be kept for three years on a password-protected computer at the researcher's place of residence. The informed consents will be kept in a locked file cabinet for three years and then shredded. After three years, the digital recordings, the data, and the informed consents will be destroyed.

Limitations

The limitations are the participants may not be willing to tell their whole lived experience of being homeless. The participants are willing to share what they think the researcher wants to hear about their story. Therefore, the participants may leave out important details about their story. The participants may feel embarrassed by their circumstances, and this can make them feel uncomfortable. The researcher may have preconceived opinions about homelessness.

Delimitations

This study will not include unaccompanied minors under the age of 18. The researcher will not interview college students who have not experienced homelessness.

Risk and Benefits

The risk of participating in this study is minimal. If at any point during the interview the participants felt anxious or uncomfortable then they were welcomed to stop the interview and no consequences would be incurred. The participants may have enjoyed telling how they have overcome their barriers of homelessness. Also, the participants may be willing to help with creating solutions for others who are experiencing this predicament.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experience of college students who have been homeless and overcome this barrier to graduate from college. Homeless college students are the invisible population. Typically, people do not associate college students with homelessness. This study aimed to bring awareness about this hidden population and recommend solutions for college campuses to assist college students. This study used a qualitative case study design because it allows data collection in the form of an interview and observation.

Chapter IV

Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to understand the lived experiences of college students who were homeless and their motivation to graduate. This study aimed to elicit the stories of current and present college students who have experienced homelessness at some point while a college student. The results of this study were to gain an understanding of the experiences of being homeless, discovering themes, and discovering the participants' level of self-efficacy. The findings of this study may help to break the common stereotypes of a homeless person and help problem solve solutions for college campuses. Often people associate a homeless person as someone who is addicted to drugs, suffering from mental illness and is lazy. College students are the invisible population of the homeless population. This chapter will explain the results of this study of homeless college students.

Findings

The research findings are based on the answers to the research questions and semi-structured questions. The purpose of the research questions is to guide the participants in sharing their story. The benefit of the interview is that it offered the researcher an opportunity to understand the effect that homelessness may have on a student graduating from college. Another benefit of the interview is through the voices of the participants; it can bring awareness to others about homeless college students. Through sharing their story can help college campuses to decrease the number of students experiencing housing insecurity or even help end homelessness for college students.

Ten participants were interviewed for this study. The researcher left the field when she began to hear the same answers from the eighth, ninth, and finally the tenth participant. The participants are current or former students who self-identified as experiencing homelessness. Participants were recruited from a Miami-based non-profit organization as well as other public and private universities. Participants received the recruitment flyer. The participants contacted the researcher to receive detail information about the purpose of this study. The participants that expressed an interest to be interviewed were asked to email the researcher their contact information and as a confirmation that he/she wants to be a participant. Upon receiving the emails from the participants, the researcher replied to the email with a confirmation. The demographics of the participants are in Table 1. The participants' names will be pseudonyms.

Table 1. Demographic Information about the Participants

Participants Pseudonyms

Name	Jack	Mia	Ivy	Levi	Theo	Chelsi	Nate	Sam	JoJo	Kelly
Age	22	21	23	22	25	19	40	22	24	23
Gender	Male	Female	Female	Male	Male	Female	Male	Male	Female	Female
Ethnicity	African American	African American	African American & Haitian	African American	Hispanic	American	African American	African	African American	Hispanic
Race	Black	Black	Black	Black	Caucasian	Biracial	Black	Black	Black	Caucasian
Employed while homeless	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Graduated	Yes	Current student & anticipated graduation Spring 2019	Dropped Out & anticipated return is Summer 2019	Yes	Yes	Current student & anticipated graduation Spring 2020	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Upon approval from the Institute Review Board, the researcher contacted the participants to schedule a date, time, and location for the interview. The researcher and participants agreed to meet at a respective agreed location that included a college or university campuses, an ice cream shop, and a park. The participants' age ranged 19-40. Each participant experienced homelessness while a college student. Seven participants have graduated from college. Two participants are current students. One participant anticipated graduation is spring 2019. Another participant, her anticipated graduation is spring 2020. One participant dropped out of college. However, she has decided to return to school. She will be starting in the summer of 2019. The names of the higher education institutions are in pseudonyms.

Researcher Observations

The participants were very gracious to share their story. The researcher was able to pay attention to the verbal behavior and nonverbal behavior of the participants. Each person wanted to help bring awareness to this hidden problem of college students experiencing homelessness. Being a homeless college student was a challenging experience for the participants because it was hard to wake up each day and not know where they are going to live. Some participants slept in their car, a shelter, hotels, and couch-surfing at a relative or friend's place. Levi (personal communication, December 2, 2018) said, *"I brought a car just for the purpose of sleeping in it."* Although the participants were employed while homeless, it was difficult to secure housing because it was impossible to afford a place.

One participant shared his story about being homeless soon after he turned 18 because he was involuntarily asked to leave his mother's home. Levi (personal communication, December 2, 2018) said, *"I graduated high school on June 3rd. My birthday is on June 5th. On June 4th, my mom kicked opened my door. She gave me an ultimatum. It was either get a job or get out. So in my head, the way I see homelessness is basically if you are in a place where you are really not wanted you can get kicked out at any point in time. So that is where it started for me on June 4th."*

An unforeseen event such as a fire forced another participant to leave the stable apartment that he shared with his sister and a roommate. Jack (personal communication, November 24, 2018) said, *"In November of 2017, the apartment that I was living in with my sister and roommate burned down. I obviously did not really have any savings. I did not have a plan at the time. I ended up basically being homeless."* He searched for housing assistance at the university that he was attending and he did not receive assistance. Jack (personal

communication, November 24, 2018) said, *“I reached out to some people at my school, but nobody knew how to help. I asked if they had any spare space, but they did not have anything. I just kind of floated around. I did not really think I was homeless, but then at a certain point, I had to say it. I was actually homeless because everything I had was in my car.”*

Faced with the reality of being homeless the participants did not want to drop out of college. The participants shared that although they were experiencing homelessness, they knew that dropping out of college was not an option if they wanted to secure a better future. Mia (personal communication, November 26, 2018) said, *“No matter what I was like I had to come to school. I was not sure where I was sleeping that night, but I knew I had to come to school.”* The participants tried to focus on their education and complete their assignments. Although homeless, the participants continued to pursue a degree. One participant decided to drop out of college to work to pay rent and to support herself and her daughter. Ivy (personal communication, November 25, 2018) said, *“I feel in order to have your own place you have to pay rent. I have to work, but when I am at work, I am literally at work from 9:00 to 6:00 to make enough money so I can provide for my daughter and me and my household. When I think about taking a couple of hours for class, and I am only missing about three classes to finish to earn my AA, but if I take that time out that is money taken away from the rent. I have to pay the rent.”*

The form of assistance that the participants received varied among this group. The participants searched for help on and off their college campus. Some participants were successful in receiving assistance at their school. Someone at their college was able to link them to resources outside of the school to assist them with their situation. Sam (personal communication, December 21, 2018) said, *“I was walking down the hallway at my school, and I saw a door for a food pantry. I went into the food pantry, and I asked for some food. There is a*

woman that works at the food pantry, and I asked her about what other resources are available at the school. She told me about SS and ET, and I went to both departments to get some help.”

Analyses of Findings

Data collection occurred through individualized audiotaped semi-structured interviews with students who have experienced homelessness and have persevered to graduate. Before the interviews were conducted, the participants received an Informed Consent form that explained what the researcher was studying and for the participants to sign if they felt comfortable moving forward with the interview. When the participants signed the Informed Consent form, they agreed to participate in the interview. If the participant became uncomfortable or stressed he/she could ask for the audio to be stopped, the researcher would stop the interview, there would be no consequences to the participant, and the audio tape would be destroyed.

The researcher analyzed the interviews by listening to digital recordings and transcribing onto word documents. The participants received a copy of the transcription to check whether what he/she said is transcribed accurately. If a participant disagrees with the transcribed interview, then the researcher made the necessary changes to assure accuracy. After each interview the researcher journal about the interview, documenting impressions, observations, and noting participants' non-verbal actions.

Codes. Three key findings emerged from the analyses of the interviews. The key findings are academics, confidence, and experience. The analyses of the study allowed the researcher to discover the influences that homelessness has on the participants' academics, confidence, and experience.

Academics. The participants remained in school despite being homeless. However, one participant was unable to remain in school to earn a college degree. The other participants did not allow their situation to change his/her plans to secure a good job and gain financial security. Each participant continued to work hard and challenged his/her self to overcome procrastination amid the struggles. Although the participants were homeless, it was not an excuse to not complete his/her assignments and school obligations.

Confidence. The participants persevered to graduate. Dropping out of college was not an option even during the times that some days were harder than other days. Each participant exhibited a high-level self-efficacy to have a positive outlook on life and to main a healthy perception of his/her self.

Experience. Each participant experienced some level of family conflict. Some participants could not depend on his/her family for support. However, there were at least one or two people in his/her life that made a significant difference in their life during his/her experience with homelessness.

Table 2 is the breakdown of the codes that were discovered from the interview.

Table 2: Codes That Emerged From the Analyses of the Interviews

Academics	Confidence	Experience
Not making excuses	Perseverance	Family conflict
Hard work	Believing in oneself	Homeless
Overcoming Procrastination	High level of self-efficacy	At least one influential person
Driven to graduate	Positive perceptions	No safety net

Themes. Three themes emerged after analyzing the interview data. The themes are family conflicts, resilience, and motivation to graduate.

Family Conflicts

A common theme among the participants is family conflicts as adolescents. Often youth become homeless because “family conflict is a key driver of youth homelessness” (Beckwith, Gelatt, Martin, Pergamit, & Stratford, 2016). The instability of their family home caused some of the participants to be forced out of their family home, or he/she willing to leave their family home. One participant indicated that when he was growing up, he constantly dealt with family conflicts. Nate (personal communication, December 1, 2018) said, *“My grandfather would often physically abuse me. My grandfather never accepted my father being with my mother. I felt like he never liked me because of my father. I did not have a relationship with my father because he was absent from my life. My mother was addicted to drugs. The physical abuse from my grandfather ended when my mother decided to move us to Atlanta.”* Beckwith et al., 2016 stated, “Family conflict and maltreatment, including physical and sexual abuse, have been identified as key risk factors. Youth experiencing homelessness report parental substance use or religious beliefs and youth sexual orientation or school performance as issues that cause conflict with parents or guardians.”

Another participant stated that he experienced a dysfunctional family home, which led to him being asked to leave his family home. Theo (personal communication, January 18, 2019) said, *“I was also dealing with all the other things that come with being homeless like in my case just dysfunctional family dynamics and stuff like that. I was homeless for you know just really the dysfunctional family dynamic that was not supportive at all towards my growth and unfortunately led to me being kicked out of my home at an early age.”* Similar to some of the

participants most homeless college students or youth indicate that family conflict is the reason for them having to leave home and possibly become homeless. According to a Journeys Home sample, “62% of respondents cite family breakdown or conflict as the main reason for becoming homeless for the first time” (Moschion, 2017). Sam (personal communication, December 21, 2018) said, *“The first time that I became homeless was when I got kicked out of my parent’s house for being disrespectful to my parents and pulling out a knife on my brother after a fight. From that moment on whenever I got into trouble I was kicked out of my parent’s house.”*

Insufficient Parental Support. A common theme discovered in the family conflict was inadequate parental support. Some of the participants currently do not have a relationship with their parents. Kelly (personal communication, December 28, 2018) said, *“I grew up as a latchkey kid because my mother worked all the time. She sometimes would work two or three jobs. When she was home, I barely listened to her, so there was always conflict between us. Now I barely talk to her because she works a lot that she hardly answers the phone when I call her.”* During their experience of homelessness, each participant did not have the support of his or her parent(s). The participants were not able to receive assistance from their parents while he/she was homeless. The participants also did not receive emotional support from their parent(s) during their experience with homelessness. Nate (personal communication, December 1, 2018) said, *“When we moved to Atlanta it was for my mother to better herself, but that did not happen overnight. Life was hard growing up because we lived in a rough neighborhood. Growing up I remember she was addicted to drugs and because of that she was never home. My brother and I raised ourselves. When I moved back to Miami, I ended up having to serve some jail time for making some bad choices. Upon my release, I was able to live with a girlfriend I had at the time. Things between us did not work out, so I decided to leave without a place to go.”*

I could not turn to my mother for help because she is living in Atlanta and she was on a fixed income. I am sure if my mother could have helped me she would have, but she did not have the capability to help me. ”

Resilience

The participants exemplified resilience amid homelessness when he/she had to deal with this adversity in his/her life. Experiencing homelessness as a college student is challenging and often a stressful situation, but the participants were able to be resilient at times of difficulty of not knowing where he/she was going to sleep. During his/her experience with homelessness, the participants had to develop positive thinking habits to build their resilience to overcome the barriers. The participants knew that regardless of their circumstance he/she had to take care of his/her self mentally and physically to endure this process. They were able to take control to get his/her self out of being homeless and put things into perspective for their future. Nate (personal communication, December 1, 2018) said, *“I could not give up on myself because I had two kids that depend on me to support them. Fortunately, my kids were not living with me when I was homeless, but I was still responsible for them. I had to continue to focus on my education. I had to keep thinking that this is temporary.”*

Motivation to Graduate

Despite being, homeless the participants were determined to graduate college. Kelly (personal communication, December 28, 2018) said, *“I like school. I wanted to finish school. I did not see dropping out as an option. I spent a lot of time at the library to get all of my assignments done so that I would not fall behind.”* The participants exhibit a high level of self-efficacy because they wanted to beat the odds despite their circumstance. The participants knew

that earning a college degree was an essential step to getting out of their situation. Although their mind may have been filled with, the thought of where they are going to sleep the participants persevered through those thoughts.

Levi (personal communication, December 2, 2018) said, *“My mind was so focused on what is happening outside of school I never had the time to study, practice, and figure out my life. I remember a couple of years back, I was trying to figure this out, and I was down to my last one hundred dollars. I had no idea where I got it must be financial aid. I was like I am going to school. I have to figure this out. I used my last hundred dollars to apply to live on campus. I did not get it. I still ended up going to school. The way I would figure out how to get to school, I would sleep in the school's parking lot in my car. I would get up early enough to rush to the bathroom to brush my teeth. This way I knew I was on time for class.”*

The participants had at least one person in their life that made a positive impact on their life during their experience with homelessness. The person that made a positive impact on the participants' life encouraged the participants to remain in college or helped him/her to receive resources. Chelsi (personal communication, December 4, 2018) said, *“One of the big influential people was a family friend. She pushed me to make sure I do graduate, and she has been helping me. She cannot help me like all the time, but she knows my situation. She will offer me a place to stay if I cannot find another one. She gives me the life support like a brother or sister or like a mom and dad would give their child.”*

Verification

The participants received a copy of their transcription to review and confirm what he/she has said during the interview was captured accurately. The participants were given a week to

review the transcription. The participants did not find any discrepancy from the transcription. The participants confirmed that the transcription of their interview was captured accurately.

Limitations

The limitation that the researcher encountered is getting a hold of some potential participants that initially expressed an interest to be interviewed. A few potential participants called or emailed the researcher to inquire about the study. However, the researcher was unsuccessful in getting a hold of these potential participants after the first initial contact.

Results

RQ 1. What is the lived experience of being a homeless college graduate?

Jack

“In November of twenty seventeen, the apartment that I was living in with my sister and a roommate burned down. I obviously did not really have any savings. I did not have a plan at the time. I ended up being homeless. I stayed in the hotel. I stayed with a couple of friends for a couple of weeks. At first, I did not know what to do. I reached out to some people at my school, but nobody knew how to help. I asked if they had any spare space, but they did not have anything. I just kind of floated around.”

Mia

“I was homeless while I was in college. I was probably maybe a good two semesters so about an academic year, and it was difficult. No, matter what I had to come to school. I was not sure where I was sleeping that night, but I knew I had to come to school and how I would get there from wherever I was on that night. I would stay at a friend's house or a family member's on the

couch. I am not even exactly sure how it happened. It just happened. I was not kicked out. I was not abandoned or anything it just happened. There was this whole bunch of factors coming in at one time, so it was not a single thing. A domino effect led to the point of me being homeless. I did not even notice that I was homeless until I realized I am not sleeping in my bed.”

Ivy

“I lived in foster care. When I first graduated high school, I became pregnant with my daughter. I was about to enter my first year of college, and I was living at CV (pseudonym). Living at CV requires that you cannot be pregnant. They liked me a lot, and I followed all the rules, so they allowed me to stay at CV. I did not want to live in CV because I wanted to get my own place. I needed to save my money, so I moved back in with my parents. I was there for a month, and my mom was still acting weird, so I decided to leave. I decided to stay with my child's father, but I realized it would not be best for me because we were not together. I decided to stay with a friend. This was my first experience of being homeless because I just got out of foster care.”

Levi

“I met many homeless people. I used to live in CH (pseudonym) before the youth program part shut down. I moved around a lot. In that time, I stay at my friend's house and my brother's house. I jumped around and during the entire process; I was trying to go to school. I was trying to figure out what I was going to eat and where I was going to lay my head down at night. There were times I slept in my car. I bought a car just for sleeping in it. I would have to find places dark enough to sleep.”

Theo

“I was not kicked out of my house for being gay or transsexual or bisexual. I was not kicked out of my house for not following a certain religious undertone. I was kicked out of my house because of abuse and family abuse, and verbal and physical abuse. However, it was a challenging experience. I would say that it affected my ability to perform academically. I could not necessarily concentrate as much as my peers, and I also did not feel like I was like my peers.”

Chelsi

“When I started college that is when I became homeless, I lost contact with my mom. My mom and I, we were looking for places to live. We could not find any. By the time, our lease was up, then we had to leave, and then I had a whole summer to figure out. I had a whole summer where I was staying with different friends until I came to campus. I have just been trying to figure out for summers where I am going to stay and then thank goodness I have good friends that I can stay with them for winter break, but summer is the hardest because it is three-month period. I do get to do summer school. For my school so then that gives me an extra month to stay. Summer is a little bit trickier for me because winter is just two weeks. I just lucked out with having friends, and I do not have to stay on a bench outside or anything.”

Nate

“I was living with my girlfriend at the time. We did not get along. We argued all the time about everything. My breaking point is when I got into a physical altercation with another man that she was messing with at our home. At that moment, I knew that I had to leave. I left without a place to live and only \$500. I was able to stay with a relative for a little bit, but things got too

complicated there, so I had to leave. After I left my relative's place, my initial thought was I needed a bed to sleep in at night. I did not want to be a burden to other relatives or friends. The only option I had was to stay at a shelter. Sometimes I would stay at a motel."

Sam

"The first time that I became homeless is when I got kicked out of my parent's house for being disrespectful to my parents and pulling out a knife on my brother after a fight. From that moment on whenever I got into trouble, I was kicked out of my parent's house. I would go straight to the shelter. When I was homeless, I was a lost spirit without a path."

JoJo

"My living situation at home was always rough. I left home when I was 16, and I lived with different family members. When I was in college, I found myself without a place to live. I bounced around between friend's houses and slept on the couch. I worked, but I did not make enough money to be able to afford a place of my own. If I had enough money, then I would stay at a hotel."

Kelly

"I wanted to do my own thing, and I was rebellious. When I was 19 years old, I left my mother's house, and I got a place with my friend. I worked while I was a college student. I ended up losing my job so my friend and I could not afford to keep up with the rent, so we were evicted. I did not want to move back into my mother's house, so I became homeless. My parents are divorced, and I resented my father because he was not in my life. Some weekends I would see him, but the truth is I hardly ever saw him. I could not live with him."

RQ 2. What factors contribute to the homeless student graduating?

Jack

“I think that for me it was just the fact that I was already so close to being done that I was like well if you do not graduate you are just going not to be able to do better than you are doing now. I figured well stuff happens, but I am still okay. My sister and my friend were okay. My dog was okay, so the important things were done. I had professors who helped me out, and so I was able to get it done.”

Mia

“I first enrolled in M in fall of 2015. Now considering that M is only a two-year type of school, it took me four years to do a two-year program. The homelessness and all these other factors played into my graduation being set off. I was not able to take on full loads. I had to make sure I worked. I had to make sure I did everything else outside of school. Now I finally have a home, and everything has smoothed down, so I only have one class left.”

Ivy

“I still have not gone back to school because I feel having a place to stay for me is key for me. I have to make sure my daughter has her own bed, and we have own house at all times. I also have a thing that is hindering around in my head that I also have a tuition waiver until I am 28. I have postponed the need to finish because I have until I am 28 to get my degree and it is free tuition. Right now, I am interested in getting a better apartment. I am applying to other apartments. I never want to be homeless again. I have been homeless enough when I was pregnant and while I had my child.”

Levi

“When I decided to have kids I always want to make sure they never had to live the life I did. When you are going through all of that, it is hard to see the purpose. The biggest thing that helped me was Casey (pseudonym) and her husband. They always helped me see the purpose. If it were not for them, I would have given up a long time ago.”

Theo

“I have always wanted to finish my bachelor’s degree. However, the factors that contributed to me graduating were definitely just constant need to prove to myself that I could do it was not necessarily about proving it to other people. It was about proving to myself that I could overcome this struggle.”

Chelsi

“The biggest thing that is keeping me here is the fact that I do have a job on campus working with the admissions department. They gave me the job once they found out about my situation. My actual advisor told me there was nothing he could do for me and told me I am sorry, but you are going to have to leave. I did not take no for an answer, and I found someone else to go to help me. I got close to the Director of Financial Aid. Tiffany (pseudonym) the director she is the greatest person. The Director of Financial Aid helped me find some scholarships.”

Nate

“I wanted a better life for myself and my kids. I wanted a chance at a better job so that I can provide for my kids. My kids have always been my priority so I just put in my mind that I could not give up. I never want my kids to experience homelessness, so I wanted to show them that having a college degree was important to secure a good future.”

Sam

“I have a passion for film and writing. Writing allows me to be creative and turn my words into a film. I stayed in school because I realized that I could make a living from writing and eventually make it into something big. When times were hard, I thought about dropping out, but then I thought what good it would be for me to drop out. I decided to stay and earn my bachelor’s degree.”

JoJo

“I had an internship that gave me the opportunity to work with people that was experiencing some hardship. I was happy that I could help these people with their problems. When I was at the internship, I felt like I was learning something that I liked. The internship taught me many skills. From the internship experience, I knew that I wanted to make this a career. I was close to graduating so I knew getting my degree would help me to get this type of job.”

Kelly

“I like school. I wanted to finish school. I did not see dropping out as an option. I spent a lot of time at the library to get all of my assignments done so that I would not fall behind. I managed to make it through school even at times I felt stressed out about my situation. I so desperately wanted to graduate so I could not afford to miss a class or fall behind on my assignments.”

RQ 3. What resources were available at the college campus?

Jack

“There were not a whole lot of resources available. I reached out, and I had a couple of people contact me, but in the end, I did not get anything from the school. I had a professor offered to set up a Go Fund Me, but that was not an official university thing. There was not anything available.”

Mia

“There is a SS (pseudonym). That is like a one-stop shop for any students that need financial assistance. They do not provide financial assistance, but they have the resources available for you to find assistance on your own. There is the bus pass program. I was not able to get in it, but I know it was available. It was just the timing was not right. There was ET (pseudonym). ET was a major factor for me because that is how I found the housing.”

Ivy

“ET was there whenever I did have time off from class I was able to go to ET at M campus. I was able to get help with looking for a job.”

Levi

“Casey (pseudonym) told me about CH. At CH, there was one woman who was in charge of everyone, and she was juggling twenty kids. Some kids in high school and some in college including kids from my school. At my school, I definitely did not get any help.”

Theo

“I was also part of NP here at my school, so that helped alleviate it. Even then because I came into NP later into my college career I had already used up all my financial aid so they could not support me financially, but they could assist me with a tuition waiver, and they could assist me with other things such as toothbrushes, food, etc. NP showed me the resources for people like myself.”

Chelsi

“For my school on our website for financial student finances, there is a whole scholarship page. I will browse through the scholarships, and I will apply for a few. Tiffany (pseudonym) will find any other outside scholarships to give to me.”

Nate

“I reached out to a professor at the school that told me about NP (pseudonym). Through this department, I was able to get some help, and they were able to connect me with other departments like the food pantry and scholarship office.”

Sam

“Both schools have a food pantry. When I transferred to the other school, I asked someone about the food pantry. The food pantry helped a lot for times I did not have any money to buy something to eat. At M, I was able to get some help from the SS and ET departments. I did not ask for help right away at the other school except for the food pantry. I eventually ended up needing some help while at the other school, and someone at the school told me about NP.”

JoJo

“I was able to get financial aid. I applied for some scholarships and the additional money that I would get at the end I used it towards a hotel and food. At the time, I did not know what resources were available at the school. I pretty much just figured things out on my own. I eventually asked for help, and I was introduced to the NP department.”

Kelly

“It was my junior year in school, and I was stressing out about my situation, so I searched online on my school’s website. I found the website for NP and I contacted Angie Smith (pseudonym). She did what she could to help me. I wished that I had known about NP a lot sooner. Angie referred me to the counseling department. The counseling services helped with managing my stress.”

RQ 4. Were there influential persons that made an impact on the homeless college graduate, if so what was that impact?

Jack

“I had two professors who I had their class once a week. I told them about my situation, and they said to take whatever time you need, and that helped a lot. The professor that wanted to start the Go Fund Me, she was a big impact. She told everybody, and many professors knew, and they would tell me words of encouragement. The professors did not give me anything, but it meant something that people were there, and they knew what was going on with me. They did not push me for anything during that time because they knew what I was going through. I needed that positivity during that time.”

Mia

“I had a lot of people around me so to name one person it would not be fair. The people that were involved they would tell me what resources I can get. The resources affected me the most because I needed to find out what I needed to do because I was not exactly sure where to go. The people that I was in touch with gave me some available options.”

Ivy

“My sister has a master’s degree, and I salute her all the time. Whenever she sees that I want to go to school, she always pats me on my back and encourages me. She tells me that I can still do whatever I want to do.”

Levi

“Casey and Joe would remind me of my purpose. Casey was like a mother figure to me.”

Theo

“My boss at the CAS (pseudonym), Vicky Lane (pseudonym), she was always so supportive of me, and she knew about my situation so she was very inclusive to my problems and she would try to alleviate my schedule or my troubles due to courses that might have conflicted with my work schedules. She was great. The Director of NP (pseudonym) was amazing too. Angie Smith (pseudonym) was a spectacular person she helped me get all the right resources. She has a connection to all the directors of financial aid and everything, so she managed to pull some money for me for some scholarships last minute essentially and so that was extremely helpful.”

Chelsi

“One of the big influential people was a family friend. She pushed me to make sure I do graduate, and she has been helping me. She cannot help me like all the time, but she knows my situation. She will offer me a place to stay if I cannot find another one. She gives me the life support like a brother or sister or like a mom and dad would give their child.”

Nate

“I told one of my professors about my situation of being homeless. She is the person that encouraged me to stay in school. She would often check on my progress by asking how I am doing in my classes. I still keep in contact with her because she allowed me to talk to her and she provided support. She saw in me that I had the potential so I did not give up on myself.”

Sam

“I was a loner, so I did not have many friends. I did tell my boss about my situation, and he would give me more hours at work. When I was down on my luck, he would invite me to have dinner with his family and offer me to stay at his place a few nights. He did not have to help me, but he did so I would say it was my boss.”

JoJo

“When I was doing the internship I had a very supportive mentor. She would give me some good advice and kind words of encouragement. I always felt like she cared and she was not judgmental.”

Kelly

“Angie Smith (pseudonym) was someone that made a positive impact on my life. She took the time to talk to me. She connected me with the help that I needed. She encouraged me to continue with my education when I was feeling stressed out. She took the time to listen to me and because of it she referred me to the counseling department.”

Summary

Through the stories of the participants, the researcher gained a greater sense of respect and understanding to anyone who is currently experiencing homelessness. The purpose of this study is to bring awareness to this invisible population on college campuses. Through the participants’ story, it may bring awareness that college campuses need to have resources available on campus to help any student experiencing housing insecurity or maybe homeless. If the college campus is on unable to provide on-campus resources, then the institution should be able to refer the student to outside resources and follow up with the student. The experience for the participants was challenging, but the participants persevered to graduate from college. Despite their circumstance, the participants knew that giving up was not an option.

Chapter V

Analysis and Synthesis

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to discover the lived experience of homeless college students who have overcome this barrier to graduate from their university or college. Homelessness is a phenomenon that someone would not associate a college student to experience. The toughest part of being a college student is experiencing homelessness. College students are typically concerned about midterm and final exams, but a homeless college student has to deal with what he/she is going to eat and sleep. Many people would not expect a college student who can attend college to be homeless. The reality is that across college campuses in the United States there are students who are sleeping in their car, living in a shelter and couch surfing. This study explored to know the reality of being a homeless student and persevere to graduate. The themes discovered were family conflicts, resilience, and motivation to graduate. This chapter will discuss the interpretation of the findings, the implications, recommendations for action, and the recommendation for future study.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings of this study shed light on the lived experiences of homeless college students and the perseverance to graduate from college despite their circumstance. As anticipated, the experience of being homeless is hard, and there are moments of despair. The road to succeeding would be a lot tougher because of the challenges of being homeless. The barrier to not having a secured place to live is more difficult when there is no parental support. The participants identified completing a college degree is a solution to securing a better life.

Overview of the Findings

RQ1. What is the lived experience of being a homeless college graduate?

Each participant became homeless at different stages of their time of being a college student. The participants shared what led them to be homeless. One participant shared his experience of sleeping in his car. He would often go to the gym to shower and brush his teeth. One participant is currently homeless although she can live in the dorms. During the summer breaks, she is fortunate enough to be able to stay at a friend's house. She does not have a relationship with her mother, therefore during the summer breaks, she does not have a place of her own, and she has to rely on a friend. Another participant was homeless from the age of eighteen to twenty-five.

RQ2. What factors contribute to the homeless student graduating?

The participants did not want their homeless circumstance to derail their plans to earn a college degree. The participants had to remind themselves where he/she would like to be after graduation. The participants were motivated to graduate because he/she knew that dropping out of college was not an option. The participants had to regain their focus for his/her education to attend classes and complete his/her assignments. Remaining motivated was not always easy, but the participants had to remind themselves that he/she needs to conquer their setbacks. Although homeless, the participants did not deviate from his/her goals to graduate because he/she was looking forward to a better opportunity.

RQ3. What resources were available at the college campus?

Some participants that attend one particular university was able to receive assistance from a program that provides "academic and support services to students identified as formerly in

foster care or homeless” (Student Access & Success, n.d.). The participants received assistance with securing employment, navigate on-campus resources (i.e., financial aid and housing), and mentoring. Other participants were able to receive support at their college for on-campus and off-campus resources. Some participants were able to receive food from their college and university food pantry.

RQ4. Were there influential persons that made an impact on the homeless college graduate, if so what was that impact?

The participants indicated that his/her professor(s), employer, and a case manager made a positive impact in his/her life during their experience with homelessness. The help that he/she received from these individuals assisted him/her to make it through their classes and obtain resources.

Implications

The results of this study have implications that homeless college students have the potential to graduate if the student exhibit a high level of self-efficacy. The participants owe their success to completion to the support he/she received from an influential person and his/her motivation to change their situation. Some students are fortunate to live with their friends, but unfortunately, some students have to sleep in their car or shelter. Dealing with homelessness has many barriers to overcome to achieve academic success and degree completion. The barriers that homeless students face in higher education includes “family trauma, financial aid, housing, lack of address and computer access, and peer relationships and social networks” (Gupton, 2016). According to National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE (2015), “The experience of homelessness itself can be highly destabilizing, even traumatic, with effects on a

student's physical, mental, financial, and academic wellbeing." The participants of this study dealt with many challenges, but through all the tribulations, he/she had a high level of self-efficacy to remain in school. JoJo (personal communication, December 22, 2018) said, "*It was often difficult being homeless because I did not know how long I was going to remain homeless. I continued to work and save as much as I can to secure a place to live. I saw myself in a better place. Even with all of that, I experienced I stayed in school.*"

The participants' beliefs and perceptions about themselves and their situation played a significant role in their ability to contribute to their academic achievement. The participants understood that his/her perceptions could positively affect their outcome. The participants needed to build his/her self-confidence to take on more challenging tasks. Mia (personal communication, November 26, 2018) said, "*I had no perceptions about myself. I do not have anywhere to stay. I did not think less than about myself. You know it was not that I could not achieve what I had to do. It is just that living in Miami is expensive. So trying to find affordable housing tends to be difficult.*"

The themes that emerged from the findings include family conflicts, resilience, and motivation to graduate. The themes indicate the experiences the participants dealt with that led to him/her being homeless or what he/she has encountered while being homeless. To understand the experiences of a homeless college student is to hear their story directly from him/her.

Family conflicts

Theo

"I did have a lot of dysfunctional family behaviors that I did not become aware of until after I was out of their home. Specifically, once, I was old enough to become aware of how terribly I

was being treated relative to what society might be considered normal. Once I started adding all those things together, that is one of the things that led to my homelessness. I was shocked by the amount of dysfunctionality and the abuse that was going on in my house and how as a child and as a teenager I just internalized it as being normal, but then you get older, and you see other people's experiences.”

Resilience

Kelly

“During the times that I was feeling stressed out about my situation, I continued to go to school. I tried to remain focus in class and get all my assignments completed. The counseling services helped during the time I needed their service.”

Motivation to graduate

Mia

“I enrolled in classes every semester since I've been in M. I am a little bit over credits right now, but no matter what I made sure that I was enrolled in classes. My mindset stayed on school because if you are in school, it is much easier to see the end goal.”

Recommendations for Action

The recommendations presented is for colleges and universities to support students experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness. Colleges and universities need to establish on-campus resources specifically for students identified as formerly in foster care or homeless. In addition to collaborating with outside social service organizations. Furthermore, colleges should help build student self-confidence and create a mentorship program.

Raise on-campus awareness. Based on the findings some participant were not aware of the resources that are available at his/her college campus. The participants were not aware of the resources because on-campus awareness about homelessness is not a major significance. When colleges bring awareness about homeless college students, then there will be better promotions for on-campus resources. Raising awareness about homeless college students is extremely important. Raising awareness on college campuses will bring to light the hidden issue of student homelessness. The reality across college campuses is some students are unable to meet basic needs and secure housing. Through awareness, it will help to break the stigma associated with homelessness. Awareness will enable university leaders and stakeholders to start working together to address housing needs for homeless college students. Without awareness, many students will continue not to identify, as homeless, and he/she will not request assistance. Bringing awareness to this hidden problem can be done through more research on this pivotal issue. Educational materials should be created to distribute on college campuses. Some students who have experienced homelessness should share their story through blogs or vlogs. One of the best methods in knowing that college students are experiencing homelessness is through the voices of the students that have the first-hand experience. Conversations about homelessness can be compelling, and it can create changes and resources. Homeless college student awareness can aid with creating funds and scholarship opportunities to address housing insecurity and meeting basic needs.

Incorporate a student support department. Given the prevalence of homeless college students, college campuses should develop a department to specifically address the needs of students experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity, and formerly in foster care. Jack (personal communication, November 24, 2018) said, “*I reached out to some people at my school,*

but nobody knew how to help. I asked if they had any spare space, but they did not have anything.” As a long-term strategy, a student support department can help several students, and this can reduce the number of students that have to drop out of college because of homelessness. If the budget is not available to develop a whole department, then a case manager needs to be hired to specifically help students that identify as homeless, formerly in foster care and experiencing food insecurity. The case manager or staff will serve as the single point of contact for students who experience food insecurity and housing insecurity. Higher education institutions need to create long-term responses for addressing students’ food and housing needs. Each college and university need to can apply for grants and request donations to develop an on-campus relief for students experiencing homelessness.

Colleges can look at what other schools such as Florida State University is doing to assist students dealing with homelessness to receive the best opportunity to attain a degree at their institution. Florida State University (FSU) provides services to homeless students through the Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (CARE). CARE “provides a comprehensive array of transition, engagement, and academic support services for traditionally underrepresented populations, including first-generation college students and students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds” (National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE, 2015). Under CARE’s Unconquered Scholars Program (US) homeless students benefit a great deal from this program as the program “seeks to promote the academic and overall success of FSU students who have experienced foster care, homelessness, relative care, or ward of the state status” (National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE, 2015). The program at FSU is an excellent example of how to help students in need, but other colleges that will consider incorporating a similar program should consider a formality of discreet for the students. Some homeless college

students may not feel comfortable with many people knowing about their homeless status. Therefore, there should be a form of discreet when assisting students. A homeless student should not have to feel concerned about the entire school knowing about their food and housing insecurity status.

Collaborate with external resources. College campuses should build relationships with local social service agencies to link students to off-campus resources. Social service agencies provide essential services that students will benefit from the resources. College campuses can designate a single person (i.e., case manager) to handle the homeless student population to connect the students to social services agencies to receive external resources. Most college may have a single person to assist homeless students, but there should be an ongoing flyer or tabling to make the students aware of this designated person.

Build self-confidence. Colleges and universities can assist students experiencing food insecurity or housing insecurity build self-confidence through encouraging students to achieve their goals by remaining active at school. Students need to be encouraged to continue their progress towards earning his/her college degree despite their circumstance. Students should be celebrated for their accomplishments when he/she has mastered through his/her classes. Students need to develop resiliently and this can be done by high levels of self-efficacy.

Mentorship program. A student who is experiencing any form of housing insecurity should be paired with a mentor to help him/her through the difficult times. A mentor is someone who will be the most important person in the student's life to advocate for the student and help him/her navigate through the resources available at the college. The mentor can be someone the student trust such as a faculty or staff member that can be an accountability to the student to assure that the student receives support and assistance. A mentor can provide words of

encouragement to help the student to achieve academic success. A mentor would be someone who is empathetic to the student and the challenges that he/she may encounter when experiencing homelessness.

Recommendations for Future Study

The recommendation for future study on homeless college students is to examine in depth the correlation between student success and homelessness. Future studies should explore a quantitative study on students who were homeless in college and persevere to graduation. Future study should also explore the actual level of self-efficacy of students who have experienced homelessness and persisted to graduation. Also, exploring the role higher education plays in ending homelessness. Based on the findings colleges across the nation can implement programs for homeless students to increase student success and equip students with the right resources to progress. The programs can be evaluated to measure the success of the program.

Conclusion

Across college campuses in the United States, students are struggling with homelessness. Most colleges do not know how deep the problem of homelessness is for college students. Contributing to the problem is that some students do not report that he/she is homeless because of the fear of being treated differently and the shame of being homeless. Many students continue to pursue their education in hopes to succeed and change their situation. Based on the findings the participants remained in school because a college degree is their way out of poverty. A college graduate plays a significant role in society because he/she contributes to his/her community through their work and philanthropic contributions.

Chapter VI

Executive Summary

Summary

The study of homeless college students is especially important because higher education institutions and society need to be fully aware of this population on college campuses across the United States. The study brings light to the experiences of students becoming homeless while in college. The experiences taught the participants resiliency and to persevere to graduate. The circumstances of dealing with homelessness while a college student was difficult, but the participants had a common goal to remain in school and earn their college degree.

Background

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of homeless college students. A qualitative case study design was the approach used to capture the stories of the participants through interviews. Most people are not able to fathom the idea of a college student being homeless if he/she can attend school. The reality for the participants is that he/she had to endure the challenges of being homeless while being a student. The participants had to deal with the roller coaster of trying to achieve academic success, build high-level self-efficacy, and to find a place to live.

Process

The purpose of a case study qualitative approach is to understand the experiences of homeless college students and their perseverance to graduation. The qualitative approach is a suitable approach to conduct an in-depth face-to-face interview with the participants. The data

collected is qualitative because the information obtained from the participants are their personal histories and experiences. Data collection occurred through individualized audiotaped semi-structured interviews with students who have experienced homelessness and have persevered to graduate. For this study, a Miami-based non-profit organization was the recruitment site for recruiting participants as well as other universities in South Florida. The target population for this study was current or former students who have experienced homelessness and have graduated. The instrumentation used in this study consisted of eight semi-structured questions that lead the way for the interviews. The participants received an Informed Consent form that explained what the researcher is studying and for the participants to sign if they felt comfortable moving forward with the interview.

Findings and Conclusions

The research findings are based on the interviews conducted with the participants answering the research questions and semi-structured questions. The participants agreed to be interviewed because he/she wanted to help bring awareness about college students experiencing homelessness. Some participants slept in their car, a shelter, hotels, and couch surfing at a relative or friend's place. All the participants were employed while homeless. However, he/she was not able to secure housing due to the lack of affordability. The participants were able to receive on-campus or off-campus resources. There was at least one influential person in the participant's life that provided significant support to the participant while experiencing homelessness. The participants exemplified a high-level of self-efficacy, which helped him/her to persevere to graduate.

Recommendation for Further Action

The recommendations are for college and universities to support students experiencing homelessness is to raise on-campus awareness, incorporate a student support department, collaborate with external resources, build self-confidence, and mentorship program. Raising awareness on college campuses will bring to light the reality that some students are unable to meet basic needs and secure housing. Incorporating a student support department will be to specifically address the needs of students experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity, and formerly in foster care. Collaborating with external resources will be to assure that students are linked to off-campus resources such as local social service agencies. College and universities need to help build self-confidence in students experiencing homelessness, which will encourage him/her to remain in school and graduate. A mentorship program is beneficial for the student because he/she can build healthy relationships with a faculty or staff member who can provide support.

Resource Guide

**Paying It Forward
Initiating Solutions to End Homelessness**



Welcome to the external resource guide. The external resource guide was created to assist those who are dealing with food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness. The resource guide is for colleges, universities, and students.

If you are experiencing a life-threatening emergency, please dial 911



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General Aid

24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Dial 211 or visit <http://www.211.org/>

Your one-stop connection to local services you need, from utility assistance, food, housing, child care, after school programs, elder care, crisis intervention and much more.

Switchboard 211 Miami-Dade

(305) 631-4211

(305) 358-4357

211 Broward

(954) 537-0211

<http://211-broward.org/>

211 Palm Beach

(561) 383-1112

<https://www.211palmbeach.org/>

Homeless Helpline

877-994-4357

(305) 375-2273

www.homelesstrust.org

Housing and Shelter Resources

Are you homeless or at risk of homelessness?

Supportive Housing and Shelters – Find Shelter and Housing
<https://www.shelterlistings.org/>

National Safe Place
<https://www.nationalsafeplace.org/>

The Salvation Army
<https://www.salvationarmyusa.org/usn/>

Covenant House
<https://www.covenanthouse.org/>

Homeless Shelter Directory
<https://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/>

Women’s Shelters – A nationwide directory of shelters for women
<https://www.womenshelters.org/>

HUD Exchange
<https://www.hudexchange.info/housing-and-homeless-assistance/>

National Coalition for the Homeless
<https://nationalhomeless.org/references/directory/>

Emergency Shelter

In order to access the emergency shelters below, you must first call the Homeless Helpline 1-877-9944357 and/or receive a referral for admittance.

- Camillus House
- Chapman Partnership
- Lotus House
- Miami Bridge
- Miami Rescue Mission Center for Men
- Missionaries of Charity
- New Life Transitional Housing
- Safespace

- Salvation Army
- The Sundari Foundation Inc.
- Touching Miami with Love
- The Lodge

Homeless Service Provider

Miami-Dade County

Carlos Laso
Housing Coordinator
Miami-Dade County

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Broward County Board of County Commissioners

Rebecca McGuire
Human Services Manager
Broward County Board of County Commissioners

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners

Chandra Williams
Senior Secretary
Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

HUD Rental Assistance Programs

Privately owned subsidized housing - HUD helps apartment owners offer reduced rents to low-income tenants.

<https://apps.hud.gov/apps/section8/index.cfm>

Public Housing - affordable apartments for low-income families, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts

Housing Choice Voucher Program (Section 8) - find your own place and use the voucher to pay for all or part of the rent.

https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/pha/contacts

Housing and Shelter Directory

Atlantic Pacific

305-357-4700

2950 SW 27th Ave, #200, Miami, FL, 33133

www.apcompanies.com/affordablehousing

Better Way of Miami Permanent Housing Program

305-634-3409

800 NW 28th St, Miami, FL, 33127

www.betterwaymiami.org

Camillus House

305-374-1065

Hearing Impaired 305-549-3019

1603 NW 7th Ave, Miami, FL, 33136

www.camillus.org

Camillus House/SRO Residence Inc.

305-374-1065 or Beckham Hall 305-634-1065

2735 NW 19th Ave, Miami, FL, 33142

www.camillus.org

Carrfour Supportive Housing

305-3718300

1398 SW 1st St, #1201, Miami, FL, 33135

www.carrfour.org

Casa Valentina

305-444-0740

2990 SW 35th Ave, Miami, FL, 33133

www.casavalentina.org

Centro Campesino Farmworker Center Self-Help Housing Program

305-245-7738

35801 SW 186th Ave, Florida City, FL, 33034

www.centrocampesino.org

Chapman Partnership

Miami- 305-3293000
1550 N Miami Ave, Miami, FL, 33136
Homestead- 305-329-3000
28205 SW 124th Ct, Homestead, FL, 33033
www.chapmanpartnership.org

Citrus Health Network/Supported Housing Services

305-825-0300
4175 W 20th Ave, Hialeah, FL, 33012
www.citrushealth.org

Collaborative Development Corporation

305-446-3095
3628 Grand Ave, Coconut Grove, FL, 33133
www.cdcflorida.org/category/affordable-housing

East Little Havana Community Development Corporation

305-856-2547
1699 Coral Way, Coral Gables, FL, 33145
www.eastlittlehavanacdc.com/5801.html

Emergency Housing Opportunities for People with AIDS (HOPWA)

305-416-2080
www.miamigov.com/communitydevelopment/pages/housing/hopwaMain.asp

Fellowship House

305-667-1036
5711 S Dixie Hwy, Miami, FL, 33143
www.fellowship.org

Greater Miami Habitat for Humanity

305-634-3628
3800 NW 22nd Ave, Miami, FL, 33142
www.miamihabitat.org

Hialeah Housing Program

305-888-9744
75 East 6th St, Hialeah, FL, 33010
www.hialeahhousing.org

Housing Opportunities Project for Excellence - Housing Discrimination Assistance

305-651-4673

11501 NW 2nd Ave, Miami, FL, 33168

www.hopefhc.com

Little Haiti Housing Association

305-759-2542

181 NE 82nd St, Miami, FL, 33138

www.haitianamericancdc.org

The Lodge/Victim Response

305-693-1170

1901 SW 1st St, Miami, FL, 33135

www.thelodgemiami.org

Lotus House/Sundari Foundation

General 305-438-0556; Help 305-4380556

1540 NW 1st Place, #2, Miami, FL, 33136

www.lotushouse.org

Lutheran Services Florida

305-969-8700

8532, SW 8th St, Miami, FL, 33144

www.lsfnet.org

Miami Behavioral Health Center/Housing

305-643-0729

www.banyanhealth.org/spectrumprograms-miami-behavioral-healthcenter

Miami Waiver Group Homes – Florida Mentor

305-670-0729, 12955 SW 132nd St, Suite 103, Miami, FL, 33186

www.flmentor.com,

Miami Bridge Youth and Family Services

24/7 Hotline 305-635-8953

Miami Central Campus, 2810 NW South River Drive, Miami, FL, 33125

Homestead Campus, 326 NW 3rd Ave, Homestead, FL, 33030

www.miamibridge.org

Miami-Dade County Public Housing & Community Development

786-469-4100

701 NW 1st Ct, 16th Floor, Miami, FL, 33136

www.miamidade.gov/housing

Miami-Dade Department of Human Services Emergency Housing Boarding

305-446-3311

www.miamidade.gov/socialservices/housing-assistance

Miami Rescue Mission

General 305-5712273

Women & Children 305-5712250

Men 305-571-2227

2159 NW 1st Ct, Miami, FL, 33127

www.miamirescuemission.com

Miami's River of Life

305-691-3391

6600 NW 27th Ave, Miami, FL, 33147

www.facebook.com/Miamis-River-ofLife-116622831848212/

Mother Teresa Mission of Charity

305-545-5699

724 NW 17th St, Miami, FL, 33136

www.miamiarch.org/CatholicDiocese.php?op=Missionaries_of_Charity

Neighborhood Housing Services of South Florida

305-571-5511

300 NW 12th Ave, Miami, FL, 33128

www.nhssf.org

New Life Shelter for Homeless Families

305-573-3333

3620 NW 1st St, Miami, FL, 33125

www.ccadm.org/ourministries/housing-shelter-services/newlife

Paragon Partnership

786-505-7653

10045 SW 213th Terrace, Cutler Bay, FL, 33189

www.paragonpartnership.org

Safespace

305-758-2546

South, 305-247-4249

24-hour Crisis Hotline 1-800-500-1119

www.safespacefoundation.org

Salvation Army

305-545-9164

901 W Flagler St, Miami, FL, 33101

www.thesalvationarmyusa.org

United States Department of Veteran Affairs

877-424-3838

Hotline 1-877-4AIDVET

1201 NW 16th St, Miami, FL, 33125

www.va.gov/homeless

Emergency Housing

Covenant House

954-561-5559

733 Breakers Avenue, Fort Lauderdale.

Emergency/ temporary housing and crisis intervention for youth under 21 and youth with babies. 24-hour intake.

Women in Distress

954-761-1133

Emergency/Temporary housing and crisis intervention to victims of domestic violence. 24-hour crisis line intake.

The Lippman Family Center

954-568-2801

221 NW 43rd Court, Oakland Park.

Short term crisis and runaway housing for abused, troubled and homeless adolescents (12-17 years). 24-hour intake.

Henderson Village

954-735-4331 ext. 124 or 126

Safe Haven housing services to homeless individuals over the age of 18 having a serious mental illness. Admission by referral only.

Broward Outreach Center South Hollywood

954-926-7417

Emergency housing and a comprehensive recovery program, for men, women and families. Admission through the Homeless Helpline.

Broward Outreach Center North Pompano

954-935-3000

Emergency housing and a comprehensive recovery program for men, women and families. Admission through the Homeless Helpline.

Broward Partnership for the Homeless, Inc.

954-779-3990

Emergency Housing with comprehensive rehabilitative services for men, women and families. Admission through the Homeless Helpline.

Hope South Florida

954-835-5241

Emergency housing for homeless families referred through the Homeless Helpline.

Food Assistance

Are you experiencing food insecurity?

Feeding America - The nation's largest domestic hunger relief organization with a network of 200 food banks across the US. Access tools to find local food banks.

<https://www.feedingamerica.org/>

Food Pantries - A directory of food banks, nonprofit organizations, and soup kitchens throughout the US. Search food pantries by state, and locate government-subsidized groceries.

<https://www.foodpantries.org/>

Volunteers of America — The nation's largest domestic hunger relief organization with a network of 200 food banks across the US.

<https://www.voa.org/>

WIC (Women, Infant, and Children) Benefits

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/who-gets-wic-and-how-apply>

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) Benefits

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/apply>

Food banks: call first for distribution hours

Miami-Dade County

Food for Life Network Food Bank

3400 NE 2nd Ave, Miami, FL 33137

(305) 576-3663

<https://www.foodforlifefnetwork.org/>

Glory Temple Ministries

7950 NW 22nd Ave, Miami, FL 33147

(305) 456-5217

<https://www.glorytempleministriesmiami.org/>

Curley's House of Style Inc.

6025 NW 6th Ct, Miami, FL 33127

(305) 759-9805

Jewish Community Services Kosher Food Bank
15455 W Dixie Hwy, North Miami Beach, FL 33162
(305) 947-8093

Miami Rescue Mission
2020 NW 1st Ave, Miami, FL 33127
(305) 571-2273
<http://www.miamirescuemission.com/>

Broward County

Joseph's Storehouse Fort Lauderdale Inc.
2967 NW 27th St, Lauderdale Lakes, FL 33311
(954) 895-7879

Feeding South Florida
1 NW 33rd Terrace, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311
(954) 518-1818
<https://feedingsouthflorida.org/>

The Pantry of Broward, Inc.
610 NW 3rd Ave, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311
(954) 358-1481
<http://www.thepantryofbroward.org/>

All Saints Soup Kitchen
3460 Powerline Rd, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33309
(954) 801-8283
<https://www.allsaintsmission.org/>

Palm Beach County

Daily Bread Food Bank Inc.
426 Claremore Dr, West Palm Beach, FL 33401
(561) 659-5070

Palm Beach County Food Bank
525 Gator Dr, Lantana, FL 33462
(561) 670-2518
<https://www.pbcfoodbank.org/>

Oasis Compassion Agency
4952 10th Ave N, Greenacres, FL 33463
(561) 967-4066
<https://www.oasiscompassion.org/>

Valley of Love Ministries
127 W Blue Heron Blvd, Riviera Beach, FL 33404
(561) 844-2400
<http://valleyofloveministries.org/>

Boca Helping Hands
(561) 417-0913
1500 NW 1 Court Boca Raton, FL 33432

Heart of God Missions
(561) 863-3573
804 10th Street Lake Park, FL 33403

Food Assistance Directory

Camillus House

305-374-1065
336 NW 5th St, Miami, FL, 33128
www.camillushouse.org

Central Christian Church

305-446-6132
222 Menores Ave, Coral Gables, FL, 33134
www.cccgables.org

Community Food Distribution Center

786-693-6639
329 NE 166th St, Miami, FL, 33162

Daily Bread Food Bank Reclamation Center

305-474-8805
1363 NW 155th Dr, Miami, FL, 33169

Florida International University – Student Food Pantry

Modesto Maidique Campus
305-348-6995
11200 SW 8th St, Miami, FL, 33199, DM 166
Biscayne Bay Campus
305-919-5307
3000 NE 151st St, Miami, FL, 33181, WUC 307
www.studentaffairs.fiu.edu/getsupport/student-food-pantry

Food for Life Network

305-576-3663
3510 Biscayne Blvd, #209, Miami, FL, 33137
www.foodforlifefnetwork.org

Holy Comforter Episcopal Church

305-643-2711
150 SW 13th Ave, Miami, FL, 33135
www.hc-ec.org

Miami Food Bank

305-219-6639
1622 NE 205th Terrace, Miami, FL, 330179

Miami Gardens Food Pantry

305-610-4004

18041 NW 22nd Ave, Miami Gardens, FL, 33056

Miami Rescue Mission

305-571-2273

2159 NW 1st Court, Miami, FL, 33127

www.miamirescuemission.com

The Missionaries of Charity of Mother Teresa

305-545-5699

724 NW 17th St, Miami, FL, 33136

www.moherteresa.org

New Evangelical Missionary Church of God

305-588-4904

450 NW 82nd St, Miami, FL, 33150

Pass It On Ministries Inc.

305-681-1594

14617 NW 7th Ave, Miami, FL, 33168

www.passitonministries.net

Riverside Bread of Life Food Pantry

305-595-0542

10775 SW 104th St, Miami, FL, 33176

www.riversideonline.org/breadof-life-food-pantry

Shalom Community UMC

305-892-9204

900 NE 132nd St, North Miami, FL, 33161

www.shalomumc.net

St. Andrews Episcopal Church

305-2382161, 14260 Old Cutler Road, Palmetto Bay, FL, 33158

www.standrewsmiami.org

The True Deliverance Church of Christ

305-254-2163

18300 SW 109th Ave, Miami, FL, 33167

All Saints Catholic Mission/All Saints Soup Kitchen

954-396-3086

3350 Powerline Rd, Oakland Park, FL 33309

Daily 2:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

LifeNet4Families/Cooperative Feeding Program

954-792-2328

1 NW 33rd Terrace, Lauderhill, FL 33311

Mon.-Sun. 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

Jubilee Center of South Broward, Inc.

954-920-0106

2020 Scott Street, Hollywood, FL 33020

Mon.-Fri. 11 a.m.-noon

St. Laurence Chapel

954-972-2958

1698 Blount Rd Pompano Beach, FL 33069

Breakfast: 8:30 a.m.-9:00 a.m., Lunch: 12:30 p.m.-1:00 p.m.

Our Fathers House Soup Kitchen

954-968-7550

2380 Martin Luther King Blvd., Pompano Beach, FL 33069

Mon.-Fri. only. Lunch: 11:30 a.m.-12:55p.m.

They give bag dinners and have a food pantry.

His Walk Emergency Food

954-701-4908 or 954-525-1313

1100 North Andrews Ave Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311

New Life Church-Hope Central

954-763-2525

1100 North Andrews Ave., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33311

Thursdays at 6:00 p.m.

Ruth's Ministries at First Congregational Church, UCC

954-563-4271

2501 NE 30th Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33306

Lunch-Thursdays 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

St. Ann's Place

2107 North Dixie Highway, West Palm Beach

(561) 805-7708

Breakfast: Monday-Friday 8:00AM-9:00AM

Lunch: Monday-Friday 10:00AM-11:30AM

www.stannplace.org

St. George's Episcopal Church

(561) 844-7713

21 West 22nd Street, Riviera Beach

Lunch: Monday–Friday 11:30AM–12:30PM

Dinner: Monday–Friday 5:30PM–6:30PM

Boca Helping Hands

(561) 417-0913

1500 Northwest 1st Court, Boca Raton

Lunch: Monday–Saturday 11:00AM–12:30PM

Dinner: Thursdays 4:30PM–6:00PM (Please note: Families only admitted for dinner.)

www.bocahelpinghands.org

The Soup Kitchen

(561) 732-7595

8645 West Boynton Beach Boulevard, Boynton Beach, FL 33472

Monday–Saturday 9:00AM–12:00PM

Trinity United Methodist Church

(561) 386-9897

1401 9th Street, West Palm Beach, FL 33401

Breakfast: Tuesdays & Fridays 6:00AM–8:00AM

Dinner for Seniors: Tuesdays 5:00PM–7:00PM

Trinity Church International Lake Worth

(828) 414-3546

Restoration Bridge International Food Ministry

2341 South Military Trail, West Palm Beach, FL 33415

Saturdays 9:00AM–1:00PM

Joins with other churches to supply hot food in the back parking lot of Community of Hope Church. Food pantry will be at Community of Hope Church.

Health and Safety

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Hotline: 1-800-662-4357 for confidential, free, 24-hour-a-day, 365-day-a-year, information service, in English and Spanish, for individuals and family members facing mental health and/or substance use disorders. This service provides referrals to local treatment facilities, support groups, and community-based organizations.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>

Behavioral Health Treatment Services - substance abuse, mental health, and veteran services

<https://findtreatment.samhsa.gov/>

Early Serious Mental Illness Treatment - Evidence-based programs providing medication, therapy, family and peer support, and other assistance for those seeking treatment for a recent onset of serious mental illness such as psychosis, schizophrenia, bi-polar disorder, and other conditions.

<https://www.samhsa.gov/esmi-treatment-locator>

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255 is available 24/7 to confidentially provide counseling services at a crisis center in your area.

<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 is available 24/7 to talk confidentially with anyone experiencing domestic violence, seeking resources or information, or questioning unhealthy aspects of their relationship.

<https://www.thehotline.org/>

Counseling/Mental Health

Agoraphobia Resource Center/Support Group

305-448-8325

111 Majorca Ave, Coral Gables, FL, 33134

www.miamicounseling.com/ourservices/anxiety/agoraphobia-anxietyresource-center

Ayuda/Family Empowerment Parents Now Program

305-864-6885 or Toll-Free 1-866-418-2983

7144 Byron Ave, Miami Beach, FL, 33141

www.ayudamiami.org/children-adultprograms/parents-now

Barry University/Barry Family Enrichment Center

305-899-3726

11300 NE 2nd Ave, Miami Shores, FL, 33161

www.barry.edu/care-center/counselingservices

Carlos Albizu University Goodman Psychological Services Center

305-5927860

2173 NW 99th Ave, Miami, FL, 33172

www.albizu.edu/Our-Clinics/GoodmanPsychological-Services-Center

Catholic Hospice/Bereavement Groups

305-822-2380

www.catholichealthservices.org/griefsupport

Center for Family and Child Enrichment Residential Group Care

305-624-7450

1825 NW 167th St, Miami Gardens, FL, 33056

www.cfcecares.org

Citrus Health Network 24-Hour Crisis Stabilization

305-825-0300

4175 W 20th Ave, Hialeah, FL, 33012

www.citrushealth.org

Community Health of South Florida/Community Mental Health Center 24-Hour Crisis Stabilization

305-252-4865

www.chisouthfl.org

Douglas Gardens Community Mental Health Center - 24-hr Crisis Residence

866-711-8626 or 305-531-5341

701 Lincoln Road, Miami Beach, FL, 33139

www.dgcmhc.org

Eckerd Youth Alternatives

786-703-1254

11571 NW 13th Ct, Miami, FL, 33125

www.eckerd.org

Family Counseling Services of Greater Miami

305-271-9800

7412 Sunset Dr, Miami, FL, 33143

www.familycounselingandcoaching.com

Archways Behavioral Health Care Center

954-763-2030

919 NE 13th Street, Fort Lauderdale, FL 33304

<http://archways.org/>

Henderson Behavioral Health

954-731-5100

2900 West Prospect Road, Tamarac, FL 33309

<https://www.hendersonbh.org/>

Jerome Golden Center

(561) 383-8000

(561) 383-5777 (mobile crisis unit)

1041 45th Street West Palm Beach, FL 33407

Mental Health Association

(561) 712-0584

2100 45th Street, Suite B12 West Palm Beach, FL 33407

Financial Assistance

Financial Aid

Every college and university has an Office of Financial Aid

Examples of financial aid

Grants – Federal Pell Grant

Loans – Private, Federal Perkins, Direct Subsidized, Direct Unsubsidized, Direct PLUS

Apply for financial aid - <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa>

Scholarships

<https://www.scholarships.com/>

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/grants-scholarships/finding-scholarships>

<http://finaid.org/scholarships/>

<https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/scholarship-search>

<https://www.niche.com/colleges/scholarships/>

<https://www.unigo.com/scholarships>

<https://studentscholarships.org/#sthash.rEui4tAA.dpbs>

Employment

On Campus Jobs

Student – Apply for positions that are available specifically for students.

Federal work study - Work-study is part of the financial aid package, and the amount is determined each year depending on the FAFSA. When filling out your FAFSA, you must indicate (it is a yes or no question) that you are interested in work-study.

Off Campus Jobs

Indeed - <https://www.indeed.com/>

Career Builder - <https://www.careerbuilder.com/>

Simply Hired - <https://www.simplyhired.com/>

Paid Internships

<https://www.internships.com/paid>

<https://www.wayup.com/s/internships/paid/>

Employment Assistance Directory

Project Upstart

(305)995-7558

<http://studentservices.dadeschools.net/projectupstart/>

Provides services for MDCPS students individual and with families experiencing homelessness.

Richmond-Perrine Optimist Club - Work Experience Program

(305) 233-9325

18055 Homestead Ave, Miami, FL 33157

9:00 am - 6:00 pm | Mon - Fri

www.richmondperrineoptimist.org

Provides employability skills training, job placement, and a stipend for services rendered.

Services provided to West Perrine and Goulds. Job training and work experience.

Sunrise Community

(305) 596-9040 9040

Sunset Dr., Miami, FL 33173

www.sunrisegroup.org

Provides people with disabilities the assistance and support necessary to enable them to live valued lives in the community. Services Include adult day training, companion services, in-home support services, ICF/DD (intermediate care facility for the developmentally disabled), residential habilitation, respite care and supported employment.

The Arc of South Florida - Robert T. Knight Centers and Leap Program

8:00 am - 4:00 pm | Mon-Fri English,

www.arcofla.org

This skills training and counseling program focuses on self-help skills, community living, vocational ability and motor skills for adults with intellectual, developmental and some physical disabilities. Services include adult day training, work activity centers, supported employment, independent living skills, and vocational rehabilitation.

Hialeah (305) 759-8500 935 SE 14th St, Hialeah, FL 33010

Homestead (305) 759-8500 712 SW Krome Terrace, Homestead, FL 33030

Volunteers of America (Homeless Veterans Reintegration Program)

(305) 644-0335

1492 W Flagler Street, Miami, FL 33135

voaflorida.org

In partnership with the veteran's employment and training services, Volunteers of America provides job readiness, training, placement, and follow-up services to target local workforce

demands with both classroom-based learning and on-the-job training. Veterans participate in job searches, and receive supportive services to ease their return to employment.

Year Up Miami (305) 237-7240

25 Ne 2nd St, Building 5, Room 5512, Miami, FL 33132

8:30 am - 5:00 pm | Mon - Fri

www.yearup.org

Provides one-year intensive training program for urban young adults 18-24 with combination of hands on technical and professional skills, college credit, and corporate internships.

Youth Co-Op, Inc.

(305) 643-6730

3525 NW 7th Street, Miami, FL 33125

www.ycoop.org

Provides workforce services at eight centers which includes job search (placement and career counseling), employment workshops, resume writing, internet access to online job searches and statewide job banks, use of office equipment for career development purposes, on-the-job training/ paid work experience opportunities, individual training accounts (educational scholarships), and support services (child care, transportation assistance, etc.)

Abriendo Puertas, Inc.

(305) 649-6449

1401 SW 1st St, Suite 209, Miami, FL 33135

9:00 am - 5:00 pm | Mon-Fri

abriendopuertasfl.org

Provides job placement referrals in addition to various classes and trainings through the Adult and Community Education Program.

Association for the Development of the Exceptional

(305) 573-3737

2801 N Miami Ave, Miami, FL 33127

8:00 am - 4:00 pm | Mon-Fri

www.ademiami.org

Offers adult day training, culinary art training, and supported employment. Clients must be 18 years of age or older and have a primary disability of mental retardation, as well as secondary disabilities of cerebral palsy, epilepsy, autism, behavioral or physical challenges, auditory or speech challenges, and other conditions categorized as developmental disabilities.

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Appendix A

Permission Electronic mail (Email) to non-profit organization and universities

Sample Email

Greetings,

I am Emmanuella Sainthilaire, a doctoral student at Lynn University. I am currently working on my dissertation on homeless college students. I am interested in interviewing students who have experienced being homeless or who are currently homeless. I am requesting permission to provide you with recruitment flyers to forward to potential participants. The student(s) name and organization will be a pseudonym for the purpose of this study. There will be compensation in a form of a gift card for participating in this study. The Lynn University Institutional Review Board has approved my study. If you have further questions, you can contact me at [REDACTED] or the chair of my dissertation Dr. Jennifer Lesh at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED].

Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Kind regards,

Emmanuella Sainthilaire

Appendix B



Have you ever been homeless during your collegiate career?

If so, please contact

Emmanuella Sainthilaire

Phone: [REDACTED] or email: [REDACTED]

The purpose of this study is to bring awareness about homeless college students and create resources.

All participants of the study will remain anonymous.

Compensation will be given in the form of a gift card.

Thank you!

Appendix C

Consent Form

Consent to take part in research

- I _____ voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within one week after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves being interviewed about my experience with homelessness and graduating with a college degree.
- I understand that I will not receive cash, but I will be offered a gift card for participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially and I will be given a pseudonym.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain confidential. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview, which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a dissertation, resource guides, and published articles.

- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained on a password-protected computer at the researcher's place of residence for three years. The informed consent forms will be kept in a locked file cabinet for three years and then shredded. After three years, the digital recordings, the data, and the informed consents will be destroyed.
- I understand that a transcript of my interview will be retained on a password-protected computer at the researcher's place of residence. The transcript of my interview will be kept in a locked file cabinet for three years and then permanently deleted and shredded.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of research participant

Signature of participant

Date

Appendix D

Semi-structured Questions

1. What factors contributed to you graduating in spite of your homelessness?
2. What are the barriers did you experienced as a homeless college student?
3. What are the academic challenges that you encountered?
4. Are you aware of the resources available on your college campus to assist homeless students?
5. What was/is your experience in getting assistance for housing on and off campus?
6. Were there any individuals that were key or impactful in your graduation success, if so, explain that experience.
7. Did you experience homelessness while in K-12, if so briefly explain that experience?
8. What perceptions did you have about yourself as someone experiencing homelessness?