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Alia Aboulhosn

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Abstract

Narratives on the Academic Resilience of Former Homeless Students

by

Alia Aboulhosn

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

August 2021

Abstract

The number of homeless students in U.S. public schools continues to rise. Although many homeless students drop out due to challenges they face, research is lacking on how some homeless students overcome challenges and graduate high school, which is referred to as being academically resilient. The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate despite adversity. Resiliency theory was the theoretical framework. Semistructured interviews with five participants provided insight into the broader sociopolitical and personal contexts in their stories, revealing the importance of speaking up about their homeless identity and asking for help. This common action led participants to finding support systems such as friends, teachers, and homeless shelters, which promoted their academic resilience to graduate high school. Surprisingly, there was a lack of proper McKinney Vento Act (MVA) implementation in schools after participants reported their homeless identity. Further research on schools' response with identified homeless students is suggested. The implications for social change include insights on effective interventions to foster resilience and how places and other people (e.g., homeless shelters providing comfort) can help homeless students graduate. The lack of MVA implementation finding may contribute to positive social change on a policy level, because the U.S Department of Education mandates that schools implement MVA and work to increase high school graduation rates for homeless students. The findings in this study give hope, with proper implications, more homeless students graduate high school for a better future.

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Ihsan and Lena Aboulhosn, the educational pioneers, who believed in me and supported me unconditionally. They showed me how to use education to promote successful future generations.

Next, I dedicate this to every homeless person out there. I hope you know that you are not forgotten and that there are many fighting for you. To my participants, I faced many challenges during my education to list, but I kept going because of you. Your resilience promoted my own resilience before I even met you. This is for you.

I also dedicate this to the people of Lebanon. For years I have studied the science of resilience; but I remain in awe of your resilience. To all individuals and communities facing challenges and trying their best, this is also for you.

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First and above all, I would like to give thanks to God, whom without I could not have been here nor been situated on the path to pursue my PhD. It was through His guidance and the support system He paved my path with that I was able to complete this Ph.D. to be at better service for Him and the world.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

The Unites States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH; 2016), along with its agency members, have been working on strategic planning to prevent student homelessness by 2020. Despite their efforts, student homelessness continues to exist, and the homeless student population continues to rise (National Center for Homeless Education [NCHE], 2019; Rahman et al., 2017). An estimated 1.4 million homeless students were registered in U.S. public schools in the year 2016-17, with the largest increase reported in high school students between the years 2014-2017 (NCHE, 2019). The increase in the homeless student population is mainly due to the 2008 housing and economic crisis, which caused some families to lose their homes, along with the high cost of living and low wages (Rahman et al., 2015). Students may also become homeless by intentionally leaving their homes due to family dysfunctions, such as sexual orientation, pregnancy, or parental abuse (NCHE, 2017).

Student homelessness is a growing concern and U.S. public schools are finding it challenging to meet the educational needs of homeless students (Rahman et al., 2017). The number of homeless high school students in the year 2016-17 was approximately 361,000 (NCHE, 2019). Out of those, 95,796 were in the 12th grade (NCHE, 2019). The senior year of high school is the phase of life where youth are transitioning to adulthood and planning college and careers. School counselors are required to assist the homeless students to academically succeed and to prepare and plan for their future (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Graduating high school gives these students higher chances of success in life (Scott et al., 2015). It is essential to get them to graduate high school and prevent them from dropping out (Ingram et al., 2017). However, many homeless students repeat

grades or even fail due to constant housing transitions and other barriers they face, such as lack of transportation (Havlik et al., 2017). Homeless students are also more likely to drop out and have disciplinary issues than their nonhomeless peers (America's Promise Alliance, 2016). Consequently, not receiving a high school diploma increases the chances of remaining homeless later in life (Ingram et al., 2017).

Despite the challenges homeless students face, some students overcome adversity and graduate high school (Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015). Students who graduate high school while homeless are considered academically resilient (Hart, 2017). Academic resilience is the ability of some students to academically succeed when presented with an adverse event that places their academic achievement at risk (Martin, 2013; Masten et al., 2015). More research is needed to understand how homeless students developed academic resilience that promoted their academic success (Clemens et al., 2018; Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015).

In this study, I built on the existing literature by gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate despite adversity. Gaining a deeper understanding of how some homeless students developed academic resilience to academically succeed can assist policymakers and school stakeholders (e.g., school counselors) by developing resiliency interventions to foster resilience in homeless students and provide the necessary resources to ensure their academic success (Cutuli & Herbers, 2014; Hart, 2017; Herbers et al., 2014; Rahman et al., 2015).

In this section, I provide insight on homeless students in U.S. public schools. I also discuss the need to gain a deeper understanding of the study topic and the potential

social implications of the study. In the following section, I discuss the logical alignment between the problem, purpose, research question, and conceptual framework of the study. I also discuss the significance, assumptions, and limitations. I end the chapter with the definitions of the key terms applied in this study.

Background

The rise of the number of homeless students in U.S. public schools is making it challenging for U.S. public schools to meet their educational needs (Rahman et al., 2015). Homeless students face challenges that make it difficult to academically succeed. However, some students overcome adversity and graduate high school (Hart, 2017; Ingram et., 2017). Previous researchers on homeless students focused on academic deficits rather than academic success (Baharav et al., 2017; Cutuli et al., 2013). Cutuli et al. (2013) found homeless students had lower academic achievement in reading and math than nonhomeless children, even those below the poverty line. Baharav et al. (2017) found that homeless students are also more likely to score lower on standardized tests and have lower GPAs than nonhomeless students. Some of the factors that contribute to homeless students' academic underachievement are moving schools frequently, high absence rates, and the challenges of having to meet their basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter (Rahman et al., 2015; Sulkowski & Michael, 2014). Similarly to nonhomeless adolescents, they are often involved in risk-taking behaviors that may jeopardize their academic achievement and future (Akelaitis & Malinauskas, 2016). Some of the risk-taking behaviors include use of marijuana, drugs, and alcohol (Steinberg, 2015). Many of the adolescents' risk-taking behaviors are related to neurobiological immaturity or peer pressure (Steinberg, 2015). In addition to the

developmental risks the nonhomeless students face, homeless adolescents lack resources such as shelter and family support, and some live on the streets (Nott & Vuchinich, 2016).

Recently, researchers started expressing the need to focus on the academic success of some homeless students rather than academic risks (Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015). This approach started when some researchers found that some homeless students academically succeed despite adversity, referring to them as academically resilient (Cutuli et al., 2013; Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015). The few researchers who have studied academic resilience in homeless students found their resiliency was developed based on the three levels: individual, relationships, external. Individual resiliency factors include self-regulation and determination. Relationships are relational factors such as secure attachments with parents or peers. External factors include schools and communities (Clemens et al., 2018, Hart, 2017; Herbers et al., 2014).

In this study, I focused on academic resilience, which is the ability of some students to succeed academically when presented with an adverse event that places their academic success at risk (Martin, 2013; Masten et al., 2015). Previous scholars have found resiliency was based at three levels (individual, relational, and external), and more research is needed to understand how some homeless students developed academic resiliency that promoted their academic success and graduation from high school (Akelaitis & Malinauskas, 2016; Clemens et al., 2018; Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015; Uretsky & Stone, 2016). Academic resiliency is what sets some students apart when going through similar experiences that jeopardize their educational outcomes and leads to some succeeding (Cassidy, 2015).

In this study, I built on the existing literature by gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate despite adversity. It is essential to give those who lived as homeless voices to share their academic experience. Understanding their perspectives can benefit stakeholders (e.g., school counselors, policymakers) by better understanding the resources and services such as resiliency programs that are needed for homeless students to academically succeed (Cutuli et al., 2013; Havlik et al., 2014; Ingram et al., 2017).

Problem Statement

The research on academic resilience in homeless students is limited (Hart, 2017; Rahman et al., 2015). More research is needed to understand how some homeless students develop academic resilience that promotes their ability to succeed and graduate high school (Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015). Homeless students who graduate high school while homeless are considered academically resilient (Hart, 2017). It is important to conduct studies relating to homeless high school seniors to ensure they graduate high school and are prepared for the next step of their lives (Akelaitis & Malinauskas, 2016; Havlik, 2017; Royster et al., 2015). Homeless students face academic risks due to various reasons (e.g., housing instability) and are more likely to drop out of school than their nonhomeless peers (America's Promise Alliance, 2016; Ingram et al., 2017). Consequently, without a high school education, students are more likely to be homeless later in life because education is one of the significant factors to break the homelessness cycle (Ingram et al., 2017).

Despite the academic risks homeless students face, some homeless students overcome the challenges and graduate high school (Hart, 2017; Rahman et al., 2015;

Uretsky & Stone, 2016). These students are considered academically resilient (Hart, 2017). Hart (2017) explored how individual resiliency linked to the academic success of former homeless students who graduated high school. However, Clemens et al. (2018) suggested the need to explore all the contexts of academic resiliency (individual, relational, external) that may promote the academic resilience of some homeless students. The voices of these homeless youth are absent in resilience research, and it is essential to give those who lived the experience voice to share their academic experience (Shean, 2015; Toolis & Hammack, 2015).

Gaining a deeper understanding of former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school and graduated despite adversity remains a topic worthy of research (Akelaitis & Malinauskas, 2016; Cassidy, 2016; Hart, 2017; Krabbenborg et al., 2013; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015; Samal, 2017; Sulkowski, 2016). Understanding the challenges they faced and how they overcame them can assist practitioners in developing more effective interventions to ensure their academic success because there is evidence that academic resilience qualities can be learned (Cassidy, 2015; Masten et al., 2015; Nott & Vuchinich, 2016). With further understanding, homeless students may be more successful and break the cycle of homelessness (Hart, 2017; Ingram et al., 2017).

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate despite adversity. Academic resilience is a significant factor for what sets students who succeed apart from those who fail (Cassidy, 2016;

Rahman et al., 2015). More research is needed to understand how homeless students who graduated high school developed academic resilience that promoted their academic success (Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015). The senior year in high school is their last year before transitioning into adulthood and planning for career and college services. Graduating high school gives these students higher chances of success in life and ending their homelessness cycle (Ingram et al., 2017; Scott et al., 2015). The more policymakers and school stakeholders (e.g., school counselors) understand homeless students' experiences, the more it will be possible to develop academic resilience intervention programs and provide resources to ensure homeless students' academic success (Havlik et al., 2014).

To gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school, I captured the first-hand accounts of the participants so I could describe the broader sociopolitical and personal factors that helped shape their experiences that promoted their high school graduation. Qualitative studies shed light on understanding how some homeless youths overcome challenges, and there is a further need for understanding their lived experiences (Toolis & Hammack, 2015).

Research Question

RQ: How do former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school tell the stories of their experiences that promoted their high school graduation?

Theoretical Framework

For this study, I used resiliency theory as the framework to understand the various contexts of academic resiliency in the stories of the participants that promoted their

academic success in graduating high school. The emergence of resiliency theory can be traced back to Garmezy (1974), who found in his study that some of the children who were at risk of psychopathology because of mentally ill parents managed to successfully develop healthy mental resources (Masten et al., 2003). There is no universal definition of resiliency. Overall, resiliency theorists agreed that an individual is considered resilient when risk is present that may disrupt development tasks or responsibilities (e.g., going to school, going to work, and relationships) yet remain competent and have a successful outcome (Shean, 2015). The definition and measurement of resilience are based on the discipline being studied (e.g., ecological, psychological, academic, or social; Cassidy, 2016; Masten, 2018). In this context, the focus was on academic resilience, which is the ability of some students to succeed academically when presented with an adverse event that places their academic success at risk (Martin, 2013; Masten et al., 2015). The foundation of resiliency theory is that three levels can contribute to resiliency (individual, external, relational; see Shean, 2015). Previous scholars found homeless students' academic resilience were fostered by either individual, external, or relational levels of resiliency (Clemens et al., 2018; Hart, 2017; Herbers & Cutuli, 2014). Researchers like Cassidy (2015), Clemens et al. (2018), and Gupton (2018) discussed the need to understand the various resiliency contexts (individual, relational, external) that may have promoted the academic resiliency in homeless students to academically succeed (Clemens et al., 2018). I applied resiliency theory as the framework in this qualitative narrative study, which guided me in answering the research question by understanding the various contexts of academic resiliency in the stories of the participants that promoted

their academic success in graduating high school. I discuss the application of resiliency theory in greater detail in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was a qualitative narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a research approach that helps researchers understand how people make sense of the world. Narrative inquirers can analyze particular views of the experience of the phenomena under study (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Researchers use narrative inquiry to understand the rich experiences of the participants by listening to their stories (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). The narrative researcher asks questions based on the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space to gain a deeper understanding of the personal, social, and place qualities in the stories that helped shape the experience of individual that is under study (Clandinin, 2013).

For this qualitative study, I applied a narrative research design. In the analysis of my data, I used thematic analysis (see Braun & Clarke, 2012; Reissman, 2008), which is further discussed in Chapter 3. The purpose of this study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their high school senior year to graduate despite adversity. By applying narrative inquiry, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of the social, cultural, familial, and institutional contexts that helped shape the individual under study (Clandinin, 2013). Etherington (n.d.) suggested that narrative inquirers ask questions that guide their participants to share various contexts of a story: cultural context (i.e., beliefs and attitudes); embodied nature (i.e., the teller's engagement of the event, their feelings, and thoughts); significance of other people (i.e., how relationships and other characters

impacted the event); choices and action of the teller (i.e., the choices the storytellers made based on attitudes and beliefs); continuity (i.e., the contextual information of where the storyteller was coming from and going); and the beginning, middle, and end (i.e., how the story begins, the plot, and completion). Researchers who apply a narrative research approach can gain a vivid description of the stories told by the participants (Etherington, n.d.).

For this study, I interviewed former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted their graduation despite adversity. I analyzed data using iterative steps by going back and forth between the data and the abstract concepts, deductive and inductive reasoning, and description and interpretation (see Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The method of collecting data was semistructured and open-ended, face-to-face 1 to 2 hours of interviews. Skype or phone were used when I was unable to get to the participants' location for a face-to-face interview (see Iacono et al., 2016). The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed. I also took notes during the interviews. I analyzed the data using a thematic narrative analysis to generate codes (see Reissman, 2008). Data analysis will be further explained in Chapter 3.

Definitions

Academic resiliency: The ability of some students to succeed academically when presented with an adverse event that places their academic achievement at risk (Martin, 2013). Students who graduate high school while they are homeless are considered to have academic resilience (Hart, 2017).

Academic success: The definition and the measurement of academic success is a broad term and researchers narrow it down to the concept being investigated (York et al., 2015). In the homeless student literature, the term academic success was used simultaneously to measure grades in homeless children or an outcome such as graduation from high school (Cutuli et al., 2013; Rahman et al., 2015). For the purpose of this study, I applied the term as it is defined and measured by Sapp (2009) as students who attained a high school diploma.

Accompanied homeless youth: Homeless youth under the age of 18 in custody with a parent or guardian (Ingram et al., 2017).

Factors: The term factor has been applied in all literature pertaining to homeless students' resilience and in the literature relating to resiliency theory. The term was used in both quantitative and qualitative to refer to resources, outcomes, processes, protective conditions, attributes, situation, and levels of resilience that promote resilience or academic resilience (Clemens et al., 2018; Cronley & Evans, 2017; Gupton, 2018; Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015; Shean, 2015). For the purpose of this study and for clarity, the word factor is included when discussing other studies only and not pertaining to this study.

Homeless students: Under the McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (MVA), the law defines homeless youth as youth who lack a fixed and adequate nighttime residence. This includes youth who are sharing houses with others due to the loss of their own homes. It also includes youth who live in parks, cars, trailers, shelters, and places not designed for human beings to sleep (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Homeless youth: The definition of homeless youth varies across federal agencies and by the context in which it is used (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2020). The term homeless youth and homeless students are often used interchangeably when discussing homeless students (Hart, 2017; Ingram et al., 2017; Rahman et., al 2015). Thus, for purpose and clarity of this study, when the term homeless youth is mentioned in this study, it will be referring to homeless students.

McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987: The MVA is a federal law that ensures all homeless children and youth experiencing homelessness have the right to equal education in public schools and to succeed in school (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Resilience: Individuals who remain competent during the time of adversity and obtain a successful outcome are considered resilient (Masten, 2018).

Unaccompanied homeless youth: This term applies to homeless youth under the age of 18 who are not in physical custody with a parent or guardian (Ingram et al., 2017).

Assumptions

My first assumption was that my participants were honest and shared rich data of their previous experiences as students who were homeless during their high school senior year and who graduated despite adversity. My second assumption was that the participants had the knowledge to answer the research question because they were selected according to specific criteria. Researchers identify and document any assumptions about their study that may interfere with the findings (Ravitch, 2016). I applied strategies to reduce any biases and assumptions, which are explained in Chapter 3.

Scopes and Delimitation

This study built on the existing literature by using a qualitative narrative approach to gain a deeper understanding the experiences of former students who were homeless during their high school senior year and graduated despite adversity (Hart, 2017). It is important to conduct studies on homeless high school seniors to ensure they graduate high school and are prepared for the next step of their lives (Akelaitis & Malinauskas, 2016; Havlik, 2017; Royster et al., 2015). This study included former homeless students between the ages of 19 and 40 who graduated high school in the United States. More research is needed to understand the experiences that promoted the academic resiliency linked to the academic success of homeless students who graduated high school (Hart, 2017; Rahman, et al., 2015). The participants in this study must have been homeless for at least a month during their senior year in high school and graduated high school. Resiliency theory was the framework for this study. There is a need to apply resiliency theory in the homeless youth contexts (Cronley & Evans, 2017). Resiliency theory helped me to interpret findings in-depth and understand what resiliency levels (individual, relational, external) promoted homeless students to academically succeed by graduating high school despite adversity. Resiliency theory could support an in-depth inquiry rather than focusing on individual factors only (Gupton, 2018; Hart, 2017).

This exclusion criteria were participants who are minors, were not homeless for at least a month during their high school senior year, or did not graduate high school. The exclusions criteria were made to not include vulnerable populations and to ensure participants' experiences could help to answer the research question. This scope of this study excluded self-determination theory and self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1989; Deci

& Ryan, 2002) because they are applied to understand the intrinsic motivational factors that may have led, for example, to homeless students graduating high school. In this paper I provide a thick description of the research process and the participant' stories (see Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Other readers can then determine whether the findings of this study are applicable to their specific context.

Limitations

There are often many limitations when conducting research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). One limitation was listening to past occurrences from a present standpoint. Participants may have been uncomfortable about sharing their experiences. Stadtlander (2015) discussed that participants may not represent the general population and researchers should take into consideration the culture and race of the participants. However, qualitative researchers are concerned about gaining in-depth knowledge about an experience (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Some biases may have been included of my assumption that the participants were resilient because the literature refers to homeless students who graduate high school as academically resilient (Hart, 2017; Rahman et al., 2015). This assumption may have interfered with my interpretations of struggles in the participants' stories although struggles may be the reason some individuals become resilient (Shean, 2015). Another way I may have been biased was knowing what previous researchers found regarding what contributed to the development of academic resilience linked to the academic success of homeless students. I may have assumed the same resources would apply to my participants. To manage my biases, I listened to the stories as they narrated them and asked open-ended questions accordingly. I wrote down my thoughts and feelings or any

biases in a reflexive journal. This reflexivity strategy helps a researcher understand how their identity and positionality can interfere with the research process such as in data analysis (Karagiozis, 2018).

Significance

This research contributed to the scarce literature on the experiences of academic resilience linked to the academic success of homeless students who graduate high school (Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015). Despite the efforts of federal agencies to end student homelessness, the homeless student population continues to rise (NCHE, 2017; USICH, 2016). Homeless students face challenges that jeopardize their academic success (Ingram et al., 2017). Failure to graduate high school places this population at more risk to find stable employment, continue to postsecondary education, or break the cycle of their homelessness. One of the ways to end the homelessness cycle is graduating high school. Most jobs now require a high school diploma and some form of further education. Statistics showed higher employment rates for individuals with a high school diploma versus no high school diploma and higher rates for those with a college degree (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). Homeless students cannot afford to miss out on the opportunity of a stable career or postsecondary education just because they are homeless, and the first step to accomplishing those goals is graduating high school (Ingram et al., 2017). Ingram et al. (2017) found that most homeless students know that education is a vital factor to accomplishing their goals. The students were aware of the need to obtain a high school diploma to pursue a career or attend college, and they were motivated to take the required steps. However, being homeless in high school can significantly impact homeless students' academic performance or the ability

to complete the courses that prepare them for college and career (Ingram et al., 2017). Senior year in high school is a critical time to prepare for these opportunities and transition into adulthood. Researchers have demonstrated that resiliency is tied to school success, and there is a need to further investigate academic resiliency in homeless students (Clemens et al., 2018; Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015)

Understanding the academic resiliency experiences linked to the educational success of homeless students who graduated high school can benefit policymakers and school stakeholders (e.g., school counselors) in developing interventions that foster resilience and providing the necessary services to ensure their academic success (Hart, 2017; Havlik, 2017; Uretsky & Stone, 2016). Some of the most significant resources may remain hidden if not given voices to those who lived the experience (Nott & Vuchinich, 2016; Shean, 2015).

Summary

By gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate despite adversity, the findings may potentially help high school administrators develop more interventions to increase the number of homeless students who graduate high school (Uretsky & Stone, 2016). The goal is to increase the high school graduation rate of homeless to 90% (America's Promise Alliance, 2018). Homeless students' perspectives can help school stakeholders and policymakers better serve homeless students (Ingram et al., 2017) and develop interventions for their academic success (Cutuli et al., 2013; Havlik et al., 2014). The findings of this study can potentially lead to positive social change because my findings may provide knowledge for school counselors and

policymakers that can be used to assist with the challenges U.S. public schools are facing with meeting homeless students' academic needs and by providing ways to help homeless students graduate high school so they can persevere with a postsecondary education or a stable career (Hart, 2017; Ingram et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2015). In Chapter 2, I provide a review of the literature that demonstrated the gap that was addressed in this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

There are an estimated 1.4 million homeless students in the U.S. public schools (NCHE, 2019). Members of the USICH (2016) have been working to solve this problem; however, the numbers continue to rise (NCHE, 2019; Rahman et al., 2015). Homeless students face academic risks and are more likely to drop out of school than their nonhomeless peers (America's Promise Alliance, 2016; Ingram et al., 2017). Consequently, dropping out of high school increases the chances of remaining homeless later in life (Ingram et al., 2017). Education is one the significant factors for breaking the youth homelessness cycle and giving the students opportunities for a stable career or secondary education (Ingram et al., 2017).

Although literature on the academic resiliency of homeless students remains scarce, researchers have found that resiliency factors help students overcome challenges to academically succeed and graduate high school (Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015). Resiliency factors in an academic context are referred to as academic resiliency (Cassidy, 2016). Previous researchers who investigated what academic resiliency factors led some homeless students to academically succeed identified individual, relational, and external factors (Gupton, 2018; Hart, 2017; Herbers et al., 2014; Masten et al., 2015). Those three levels of resiliency are the basis of the concept of resiliency theory (Shean, 2015). However, the research on academic resiliency supports increasing exploration about the academic success experiences of homeless students rather than focusing on the risk factors (Masten et al., 2015).

The purpose of this study was to build on the existing literature by gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were

homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate despite adversity. By understanding the resiliency factors that promoted homeless students to academically succeed, educators can develop more effective interventions to facilitate resiliency in homeless students to ensure their academic success (Havlik et al., 2014). A deeper understanding of homeless students' experiences can guide school counselors to provide the services needed to ensure the academic success of homeless students (Hart, 2017). In Chapter 2, I provide a literature review. I synthesized other scholars' findings on academic resiliency of homeless students. I also discuss the challenges high school senior face and the laws that provide homeless students' rights and services.

Literature Search Strategy

I conducted a comprehensive search using several databases. The databases included SAGE Journal, ProQuest, EBSCO host, Education Source, PsychINFO, and Academic. Articles were peer-reviewed and published within the last 5 years. Seminal works that were published more than 5 years ago were also included. Key words included *academic resilience, homeless high school students, homeless high school students, homeless students' academic achievement, academic performance, academic success, homeless students, risks, homelessness in American students,* and *school counselors.* Due to the paucity of the literature on the topic, I also used Google Scholar to access articles published between 2014 and 2019. The keywords I used with Google Scholar were *academic resilience, homeless high school students, homeless students' academic success,* and *homeless students' academic performance*. Search engines for government-based websites or news articles included Google Chrome.

Resiliency Theory

The emergence of resiliency theory can be traced back to Garmezy (1974), a clinical psychologist whose research started with a focus on mental illnesses before it shifted to resilience (Shean, 2015). The shift occurred when Garmezy was examining the risks in children whose parents were diagnosed with mental illness. Historically, these children were thought to be high risk for psychopathology because of their parents' status; however, Garmezy found that some of the children had positive outcomes, meaning a healthy mental development, while other children had negative outcomes (Masten et al., 2003). Garmezy concluded from his studies on children facing adversity that IQ levels and family stability (e.g., stable housing, stable marriages by their parents, and the level of affection the family portrayed) were factors that allowed children to be competent, socially engaged with their peers in schools, disciplined, and better at solving problems through social skills. This provided researchers with new information that later became known as resiliency theory (Masten, 2018). Soon after, resiliency researchers began examining how some individuals and families experiencing adversity such as homelessness, poverty, or violence adapted better than others (Masten, 2018).

Despite the growing interest, the lack of definition of resilience has been a challenge for researchers who conduct resiliency research (Masten, 2018; Shean, 2015). For example, Garmezy (1991) emphasized in his definition that individuals can be considered resilient when they sustain competent functioning when faced with adversity. Garmezy meant that resilient individuals do get stressed, but they can maintain adaptive behavior throughout adverse situations (Shean, 2015). In contrast, Rutter (2013) focused more on the outcome of the adverse experience and explained resilience as when

individuals go through the same negative experience, yet some of those individuals have better outcomes than the others. One of Rutter's (1998) principles of resiliency emphasized that resiliency is influenced by genes and environment. This principle was based on his study of Romanian orphanages, where children continued to exhibit negative outcomes even after they were adopted to a safe environment. Rutter (2013) also emphasized that resiliency is based on individual factors (e.g., determination and self-control) and social relationships (parents or sibling relationships).

Masten (2018) explained resiliency as processes and outcomes. Masten conceptualized resilience as the positive adaptations individuals or families present when faced with adversity that have a successful outcome. Masten et al. (1999) conducted a longitudinal study with children (8-12 years of age) until they were adolescents (14-19 years of age) to understand impact parenting quality and intellectual functioning had on resiliency. The results indicated that psychosocial relationships (e.g., parenting) and intellectual functioning (e.g., problem solving) had significant impact on promoting resiliency. Masten also discussed external support as resources to promote resiliency. All these previous researchers proposed that resiliency factors were based on three levels: individual, relationships, and external (Masten, 2018; Shean, 2015).

Individuals demonstrate individual resiliency characteristics by the way they control their emotions or behavior, their cognitive skills, how they adapt to new situations, and how they interact with others (Shean, 2015). Individual resiliency factors have included problem solving skills, self-regulation, faith, and motivation (Masten, 2018). Relational resiliency refers to the relationships individuals have with others and the level of care and warmth they receive (Shean, 2015). Relational factors have included

secure attachment relationships with either family, friends, mentors, or romantic partners (Masten, 2018). External resiliency concerns the support levels an individual receives external to families (Shean, 2015). External resiliency factors have been linked to schools and community (Masten, 2018).

Applying resiliency framework in a study allows a researcher to refocus attention on what is working rather than what is not when adverse experiences are being shared. It allows a researcher to capture the protective factors within the context rather than the problems (Shean, 2015). Researchers who study resiliency continue to explore how individuals adapt to adversity and seek to better understand effective strategies of resiliency for individuals and societies (Gupton, 2017; Masten, 2018). Resiliency research has been found to have a positive impact on the lives of youth academically, emotionally, and psychologically (Shean, 2015). Resiliency theory guides questions to construct research and understand why some youth grow up to be successful despite being presented with situations that increase the risks of failure (Zimmerman, 2013). Researchers can apply resiliency theory in various disciplines (e.g., ecological, psychological, academic, or social; Cassidy, 2015; Masten, 2018). The definition and measurement of resiliency is applied according to the discipline being studied, which in this study will be academic resilience.

Academic Resiliency

Academic resilience emerged out of the concept of resilience (Cassidy, 2016; Jowkar et al., 2014). Academic resilience is the ability of some students to succeed academically when presented with an adverse event that places their academic achievement at risk (Martin, 2013; Masten et al., 2015). There is a lack of studies focused

on the academic success of homeless students rather than their academic risks, and there is consequently a need to explore the academic success of homeless students (Masten et al., 2015). Cronley and Evans (2017) conducted a systematic review and found 21 studies in eight databases between the years 1980 and 2015 that applied resiliency framework in their homeless youth studies. These researchers mainly found faith, relationships, self-esteem, and schools to be resilience factors (Cronley & Evans, 2017). I used a resiliency lens to gain a deeper understanding of the experience that promoted former homeless high school students to graduate high school despite adversity.

Resiliency research can significantly improve academic outcomes for young individuals (Shean, 2015). The few researchers who have explored academic resiliency in the homeless context also found academic resiliency factors to be based on the three levels: individual, relationships, and external. Individual resiliency factors include self-regulation and determination. Relationships refer to relational factors such as secure attachments with parents or peers. External factors include schools and communities (Hart, 2017; Herbers et al., 2014).

Individual Resiliency

Hart (2017) conducted a phenomenological study with six students who were currently in college around the Texas area but were identified as homeless students in high school senior year. The purpose was to identify what factors motivated the students who were homeless in high school to graduate despite the obstacles and continue onto college. Hart discussed that parenting has often been a key factor in homeless students' academic success and wanted to understand what motivated unaccompanied homeless students to succeed when parents were absent. Hart applied self-determination theory and

self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1989; Deci & Ryan, 2002) to understand their perspectives so that the motivational factors found could assist stakeholders with current interventions to increase the academic success of homeless students. The findings of the semistructured interviews concluded five themes about their experience: isolation, faith, determination, confusion, and academic achievement.

All six participants in Hart's (2017) study shared the theme of isolation and confusion. Isolation was conceptualized as the loneliness the students felt while being homeless and their confusion about where to stay, how to pay any rent fees, the people they could trust in general, and their college applications (Hart, 2017). Faith was a motivational factor shared by participants about how they believed God would keep them safe and get them through their adversity. Determination was a significant factor some participants shared that led to their academic resiliency to succeed and continue to college. Their determinations to academically succeed ranged from making a parent proud to be the first in the family to go to college. Lastly, academic achievement was another theme identified. This theme was not clearly conceptualized, but it concerned how students were eager to share their accomplishments while they were in high school. For example, one student was excited to share her college scholarship award while another felt excited to share her acceptance to the National Honor Society.

A weakness in the Hart (2017) study may have been that the researcher intended to look for internal factors that motivated the homeless students, but also found external factors such as motivation to succeed to make a parent proud were present. One of the participants' criteria was that they were unaccompanied youth, meaning without a parent or legal guardian, but one of the participants discussed her mother's presence during the

experience that was being explored. Hart contributed to the scarcity of the literature on the academic success of homeless students, specifically with high school students, which I built upon. Hart implied that understanding the challenges of the lived experiences that homeless students face and the factors that motivate them to academically succeed can be beneficial for high school counselors to know. Hart also noted that the literature on the academic success of homeless students remains scarce, and there is a need for qualitative studies to understand the experiences of high school homeless students (Hart, 2017; Uretsky & Stone, 2016).

Relational Resiliency

Herbers et al. (2014) conducted a quantitative study to examine the impact parenting had on the academic success of homeless students. The goal was to understand how positive coregulation (PCR) through parenting impacted the cognitive abilities of homeless children. Herbers et al. conceptualized cognitive abilities as intelligence levels and executive functioning (EF), which is a central component of self-regulation. Herbers et al. hypothesized that the better the PCR, the better the cognitive abilities of children, which led to academic success in school, better behavior, and higher social skills with peers. The participants included the homeless children and their caregivers (n = 131) who had been at a homeless shelter for approximately a month by the time data were collected. Data were collected with the parents alone, then with the parents and children, and the homeless children's teachers answering a questionnaire. Between the parents and their children, eight tasks were given. The tasks were free play, cleanup, problem solving for two of the tasks, Labyrinth board game, safety plan, guessing game, and Tangoes game. To measure the IQ, tests like the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn & Dunn,

2007) were given. For their teachers, tests like the MacArthur Health and Behavior Questionnaire (Essex et al., 2002) were given.

The results were as the authors hypothesized, that positive parenting was a resilient factor in children who were homeless. The children who experienced positive parenting demonstrated increased executive functioning, self-regulation, and IQ levels, which resulted in better academic outcome and behavior management in school. Herbers et al. (2014) suggested that interventions to support homeless children's self-regulation and school adaptation can be applicable by intervening with parents on how to positively parent the child when the family is homeless. Although the participants included children and I am looking at resilient factors in adolescents' experiences, parenting and self-regulation will be factors that may have led my participants to their academic resiliency.

External Resiliency

Clemens et al. (2018) conducted a qualitative study to understand how the MVA, the federal law that gives homeless students' rights and services to receive an education, can promote resiliency in students experiencing homelessness. The goal was to provide stakeholders guidelines on how to implement the MVA program to promote resiliency, hope, and strength for the youth experiencing homelessness. Clemens et al. used Bronfenbrenner's (1977) bioecological model to explain how support can occur on various levels. The research question of the study was how the students' support system (homeless education liaisons, teachers, school staff, and school leaders) affects resiliency in the homeless students (Clemens et al., 2018).

The participants included 24 representatives from various school districts that were divided into three focus groups. Each group was 90 minutes long with semi-

structured questions to promote discussions to understand how they are implementing the MVA in their schools and what were the challenges and successes based on the approach they were using to implement it (Clemens et al., 2018). After receiving site permission, the authors also interviewed six faculty members who directly interacted with homeless students, such as the transportation coordinator and homeless liaisons and the direct of federal programs. Other participants included three homeless students, three mothers, and one family, who varied in the length of their homelessness from 1 week to several years. The goal with the semi-structured interviews was to understand how the participants came to be informed about the MVA and how it helped them.

Four main themes emerged from the data collection. First theme showed that it was incidents that led the identifications of individual youth and homeless families who were homeless. What that means is someone in their microsystem world, such as school personnel, recognized their homelessness and provided the support needed. Other times it was homeless students or their mothers who approached the school personnel such as their teacher, to explain they were homeless. Clemens et al (2018) called the second theme philosophy of the services provided for the homeless students. This theme emphasized the need for school personnel to identify homeless students and be knowledgeable of the services available to them based on their specific needs, because their needs may differ from one to another (e.g., transportation, shelter, tutoring). Providing the services according to their needs can assist homeless students' academic success. The third theme found the need to build relationships with the families. This theme emerged by exploring ways to identify homeless students yet minimize assumptions that some families or students may be homeless. This can be done by asking

all newcomers the same set of question as they are registering (e.g., home address). This also led to trust in relationships with school personnel, which was found as an essential component to build resiliency in students. The last theme was the collaboration of the school with the community. The participants shared that telling stories to their communities about the homeless families in their schools, led to awareness and donations.

When working together, more awareness of the homeless family situations is recognized by the community that can lead to more funds access through donations. For example, one school had a technology company donate 100,000 school backpacks. Those donations are needed especially when federal funds are not enough to support all the needs of the homeless students and their families (Clemens et al., 2018). This led to the emphasis of identifying homeless students and their families, so their needs are met and so the MVA provides funds according to number of homeless students registered. Clemens et al. (2018) indicated that professional development of the MVA for all school personnel on understanding the context of homelessness and looking for signs (e.g., wearing same clothes, address to a shelter or no address) are essential to foster a resiliency through the MVA. Supporting youth through an ecological perspective can promote a resilient environment which result in educational success for homeless students.

In this qualitative narrative inquiry, I built on the existing literature by gaining a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted young adults who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate, despite adversity. There is a need to gain a deeper understanding of resiliency factors that linked to the academic success of

homeless students who graduated high school through qualitative studies (Gupton, 2018; Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015). The voices of homeless youth are absent in the resiliency research (Cronley & Evan, 2017). Cronley and Evans (2017) suggested current researchers to conduct studies using resiliency framework on homeless youth, to understand what factors were incorporated to enhance interventions and services for them to succeed. It is vital to understand what factors promoted their resiliency to overcome adversity (Cronley & Evans, 2017; Hart, 2017). Applying resiliency theory allows a researcher to capture resiliency themes narrated by the participants (Cronley & Evans, 2017). Some of the most significant factors may remain hidden if not given voices to those who lived the experience (Nott & Vuchinich, 2016; Shean, 2015).

High School Seniors and Adolescence

High school seniors are considered adolescents (Steinberg, 2015). Adolescents are often involved in risk taking behaviors that may jeopardize their academic achievement and future (e.g., drugs and alcohol; Akelaitis & Malinauskas, 2016; Steinberg, 2015). The adolescent stage is a time where critical developments occur (e.g., emotional and social skills; Akelaitis & Malinauskas, 2016). Even though the identity of individuals occurs from childhood to adulthood, it becomes more significant in what Erickson called the adolescent stage of identity vs. confusion (Jones et al., 2014). Identity formation is influenced by parents, siblings, and society. Other influences of identity formation are biological and psychological. The support and opportunities offered to adolescents within their social context also influences their identity (Kroger, 2017). Although those influences may be true, Jones et al. (2014) discussed other current factors which

influence identity formation (e.g., adolescents' friends or other adults involved in the development of the individual). This could be due to less time spent with parents and more time with friends, during after school activities. This influence is observed especially in the senior years of high school.

According to College Parental Control (2019), high school seniors face factors that increase their stress levels. Senior students worry about whether they will get accepted into college. Seniors also stress on making the right decision about which college to choose. Some seniors also stress about leaving their homes or families to attend college and being on their own.

Other stressful factors high school seniors face includes questioning their abilities to succeed in college and their choice of majors and careers. Some seniors may fear the social life they have in college. It is necessary to conduct studies on homeless high school seniors, to ensure they graduate high school and are prepared for the next step of their lives (Akelaitis & Malinauskas, 2016; Havlik, 2017; Royster et al., 2015). Academic resiliency is an important asset that students can develop, to overcome obstacles that may threaten their educational success (Cassidy, 2016). It is even more crucial to teach homeless students to be academically resilient since they face more adversity than their non-homeless peers; and since receiving a high school education is a primary step to break their homelessness cycles (Hart, 2017; Rahman et al., 2015). Understanding the academic resiliency factors that promoted former homeless students to academically succeeded by graduating high school, is essential for developing interventions to ensure academic success for homeless students (Cutuli et al., 2013; Hart, 2017; Havlik et al., 2014; Ingram et al., 2017; Nott & Vuchinich, 2016).

Youth Homelessness

While homelessness was thought of as unaccompanied men decades ago (Cronley & Evans, 2017), nearly half of the current homeless population includes homeless youth (Cronley & Evans, 2017; Hart, 2017). In 2016, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development found that of the individuals experiencing homelessness, 35% were families with children and 60% of children were under the age of 18 (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2016). Unaccompanied youth under the age of 18 made up 11% (35,686). The concern of homeless youth was noted decades ago, particularly in the late 1980s to early 2000s as a temporary issue in U.S. urban centers (Rahman et al., 2015). Ever since, the youth homeless population has been accelerating and is now seen across every state in America (Rahman et al., 2015). The numbers started increasing during the 2008 recession (Sparks, 2014).

It is almost impossible to get an accurate number of the homeless youth population (Ingram et al., 2017). Factors like hiding their identity and constant mobility make it difficult to get an exact count (Ingram et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2015). School records have made it helpful to collect data on homeless students, which show the number of homeless students continues to rise (NCHE, 2019). Researchers studying homeless youth have found commonalities such as poverty, less economic resources (e.g., employment), and difficulty of findings stability again once homeless (Gupton, 2017). Other consistent findings with homeless youth are educational challenges once they are homeless, health issues, and social and emotional conflicts (NCHE, 2019).

Ingram et al. (2017) conducted a large study with homeless youth from different locations around the country to understand the impact of being homeless from their

perspective. In-depth interviews were conducted with 44 current homeless youth and 158 formerly homeless youth (who were homeless at some point during their middle or high school years). Ingram et al. found that 82% of the participants reported that being a homeless youth had significant impact on their lives. Lacking the feeling of safety and security impacted 72% of the homeless youth, emotional and mental well-being impacted 71%, physical health impacted 62%, and self-confidence impacted 69% of the homeless youth. It is also important to note that 67% reported that being a homeless youth had an impact on their educational needs and it was difficult to remain in school while being homeless or succeed if they did stay. Some of the homeless youth in their research presented strength, resilience, and motivation. They also understood that receiving an education can allow them to accomplish their goals and to exit homelessness. It is imperative that we understand the academic resiliency factors which assisted some high school seniors to graduate high school while homeless, so we can assist others living the same experience through programs and interventions (Clemens et al., 2018; Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015)

For the purposes of this study, I used the definition of homeless youth under the MVA, which was amended in 2015 by Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The MVA is a federal law that ensures all homeless children and youth experiencing homelessness have the right to equal education in public schools and that they succeed in school. The law defines homeless youth as youth who lack a fixed and adequate nighttime residence. This includes youth who are sharing houses with others due to the loss of their own homes. It also includes youth who live in parks, cars, trailers, shelters, and places not designed for human beings to sleep.

Under the MVA, homeless youth consist of two subcategories, unaccompanied youth and accompanied youth (Ingram et al., 2017). I conceptualized unaccompanied youth as homeless youth who are not in physical custody with a parent or guardian and accompanied homeless youth as those in custody with a parent or guardian (Ingram et al., 2017). Homeless youth are a growing concern in the United States (Ingram et al., 2017; Rahman, 2015) and additional research is needed to understand how to help homeless students succeed in school (Masten et al., 2015). Research on homeless youth experiences will help to inform strategies and interventions to build protective factors which can allow them to academically succeed (Cornley & Evans, 2017; Hart, 2017; Rahman et al., 2015).

Causes of Homelessness Youth

Even though the concern of homeless families started decades ago, the 2008 recession significantly impacted the increase of homeless families in the U.S. (Rahman et al., 2015). Many families lost their homes due to lack of affordability, the high cost of living, and low wages (Rahman et al., 2015; Sparks, 2014). The effect of the recession contributed to the increase of homeless students since many of the families who became homeless had children. The NCHE (2014) demonstrated there was a 72% increase in the homeless students' population since the 2008 economic crisis. The enrolled number of homeless students registered in K-12 public schools in the school year 2016-17 was approximately 1.4 million (NCHE, 2019). Besides lack of affordable housing and low wages, other causes are racial inequalities, domestic violence, and decreased support from the government (National Center on Family Homelessness, 2014).

Other reasons students become homeless is by leaving their homes or being asked to leave by their families due to family dysfunctions, such as sexual orientation, pregnancy, or parental abuse (NCHE, 2017). Students who identify themselves as gay, lesbian, or transgender are estimated to be between 20% to 40% of homeless youth (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2019). Their sexual orientation is a common cause for getting kicked out of their homes by their family members due to being unaccepted (Ingram et al., 2017). Some girls who became pregnant are also asked to leave their home because their families no longer accepted them after becoming pregnant. An estimated 6% to 22% of homeless girls are pregnant (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2019).

When students intentionally leave their homes, it is often due to being sexually or physically abused by a family member (Ingram et al., 2017). An estimated of 46% of homeless youth have been physically abused and 17% have been sexually abused (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2019). Regardless of how homeless youth became homeless, it remains socially responsibility to protect this vulnerable population by providing them shelter, food, and an education (Rahman et al., 2015).

Government/Policy Response

The McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The increasing rise of homeless youth and families inspired several federal agencies to respond to the education of the homeless children and youth (Rahman, 2015). For example, the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) is a federal program that aids state educational agencies (SEA) to ensure homeless students have equal access to public education (Congressional Research Service, 2018). This program was originally amended under the MVA and was reamended in 2015 under the MVA as

part of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA; Congressional Research Service, 2018). The MVA is a federal law that ensures all homeless children and youth experiencing homelessness have the right to equal education in public schools and that they succeed in school (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

The MVA is the main federal law which relates to homeless students' education (Sulkowsi & Beaulieu, 2014). It requires that public schools in the U.S. identify homeless children and youth, ensure they are connected with the right services (social services, homeless centers, transitional or permanent housing, shelters, etc.), and ensure their attendance (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Other ways the law ensures students' success is by removing any barriers regarding their enrollment process in school, such as having to provide proof of address and providing transportation to and from school. The MVA ensures its implementation in each by state by having SEA appoint a State Coordinator for the Homeless and the local education agency (LEA) then appoints a local homeless liaison (NCHE, 2017; U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

The MVA law places emphasis on high school graduation for homeless students (School House Connection, 2019). The reauthorized ESSA in 2015 required states and districts to report homeless students' graduation rates for the first time (Ingram et al., 2017). It also urged schools to assist homeless students with their needs so they can graduate (America's Promise Alliance, 2016). The Education Leads Home (2019), which is a national campaign focusing on improving the condition of youth homelessness through education, found that approximately 64% of homeless high school students graduated in the year 2016-17. This report is based on the 26 states that reported the graduate rates of homeless students.

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education marked its 13th year in collecting annual performance metrics students registered as homeless in U.S. public schools (NCHE, 2019). More data will be released with each year. The goal of the national campaign is to increase graduation rate of homeless students to 90% by the year 2030 (Education Leads Home, 2018). By understanding their experience and resiliency factors of homeless students, educators and stakeholders can develop intervention to ensure their academic success (Havlik et al., 2014).

Challenges to Implementing the McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The increase in the numbers of homeless students in U.S. public schools has made it challenging for school stakeholders to meet all the homeless students' needs (Rahman et al., 2017 Sulkowski, 2017). Some authors emphasized the need for the MVA law to be enacted more in schools to ensure the educational success for homeless students since homeless student are at a high risk of dropping out (Ausikaitis et al., 2015). Yet, it is difficult to understand homeless youth and implement programs tailored to their needs when it is not known how do know their exact numbers and characteristics. Knowing the exact numbers of homeless youth is a challenge because some stay with a friend as a temporary residence rather than the streets or shelters, which are where homeless youth are most often counted (Morton et al., 2017). Ausikaitis et al. (2015) conducted a qualitative study to understand the perspectives of homeless youth who were trying to remain in high school. The researchers collected data from three focus groups of 18 participants who ranged ages (17-22), varied in length of time they were homeless (1 month- 8 years) and were enrolled in either high school, GED classes, or some college. Several themes were emerged. Students were unaware of their rights of under MVA.

Students reported they wanted to graduate high school but faced challenges such as lack of transportation. They also struggled whether to report their identity as homeless or not, because they feared their teachers may change their perceptions towards them and that the stigma of being homeless may affect their social life in high school.

Ausikaitis et al. (2015) suggested schools cultivate an environment of trust and support to homeless students, which can make them feel more comfortable in disclosing their identity. The authors also suggested that training teachers and school staff to identify potential homeless students by recognizing signs students may show such as excessive absence, personal hygiene, and appearing constantly fatigued. Some of the participants in the Ausikaitis et al. study said that teachers and school stakeholders had a significant role in getting them to succeed school. Teachers and staff can educate homeless students and/or their parents about their rights under the MVA once they become aware of the services under the law themselves.

Identifying students who are homeless is necessary in order to assist them with meeting their needs (Pavlakis et al., 2017). They are unable to receive their rights for a proper education under the law, if they do not disclose themselves as homeless (Ausikaitis et al., 2015). For example, the participants in the Ausikaitis et al. (2015) study reported difficulty getting to their schools after having move to a farther shelter and were not aware that transportation is a service that is provided under the MVA law for homeless students. Identifying homeless students is imperative so they can be provided with the services they are entitled to by law (Ingram et al., 2017; Pavlakis et al., 2017; Sulkowski, 2016).

One of the reasons homeless students do not disclose their homelessness identity is because of the stigma attached to being homeless (Havlik et al., 2018; Sulkowski, 2016). This is mainly seen with high school homeless students (Uretsky & Stone, 2016). Homeless students who were unaccompanied by a parent or legal guardian also hide their identity due to their fear of being placed in the foster care system (Ingram et al., 2017). Ingram et al. (2017) found that 67% of homeless students felt uncomfortable sharing their homelessness situation, and that their parents were also uncomfortable about sharing their situation due to fear of losing custody of their children. Despite this, parents are more likely to report it to school than a homeless youth would, after finding out their rights and services for being homeless (Wynne et al., 2014).

School Counselors' Role With Homeless Students

Another policy enacted after the MVA, was amended in 2015 by ESSA (Havlik, 2017). The policy requires school counselors to assist homeless students' academic success and in planning and preparing for their college and career. School counselors can work with homeless students' teachers and discuss informal and formal assessment to provide the students with the appropriate interventions to succeed. School counselors can also work with homeless students early on in high school to teach them the skills necessary to succeed in college and help them prepare for college (e.g., financial aid, the various majors available; Dukes, 2013). They can also prepare homeless students for their career by identifying their interests, strengths, and weaknesses (Havlik, 2017). Students who meet with school counselors are twice as likely to attend college especially for underrepresented students who may be first generation students (Cholewa et al., 2015).

The role of school counselors is crucial to homeless students' academic success (Havlik, 2017).

While school counselors can assist the students with their academic, social, and emotional needs, preceding these needs are the basic needs such as food, water, and shelter (Havlik et al., 2014, 2017). This is a challenge Havlik et al. (2017) found in their study. Out of the 23 school counselors interviewed, only two reported they are meeting the students' academic, social, and emotional needs. The rest are having to meet the basic needs of students and provide them with referrals. The school counselors in the Havlik et al. study suggested that the roles of stakeholders need clarification, and that other school personnel are delegated to ensure students' basics needs are being met, so they fulfill their primary role of assisting homeless students' academic success and prepare for college and their future career.

Educational Outcomes for Homeless Students

Risks

Homeless students are more likely to drop out and have disciplinary issues than their nonhomeless peers (America's Promise Alliance, 2016). Many homeless students repeat grades or even fail due to constant housing transitions and other barriers they face, such as a lack of transportation (Havlik et al., 2017). Other factors contributing to the academic underachievement of homeless students are moving schools frequently, high absence rates, and the challenges of having to meet their basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter (Rahman et al., 2015; Sulkowski & Michael, 2014). Students are impacted whether they are homeless for a week, month, or a year (Ingram et al., 2017). However, extended durations of homelessness have a negative impact on the physical and

mental development of children and their education (Cutuli et al., 2014; Ingram et al., 2017).

Piche et al. (2018) conducted a quantitative study to examine the relationship between the risk-taking behaviors of homeless youth and its relation to their self-reported EF level. The hypothesis of their study was that the lower the EF level, the more homeless youth engaged in risk-taking behaviors. This led to negative outcomes, such as sexual behavior, alcohol, and drug abuse. The 149 homeless youth participants were recruited from two homeless shelters in the Chicago area. Some of the instruments the researchers collected the data with were semi-structured interviews, the Behavior Rating Inventory of Executive Functioning (BRIEF), and Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The researchers found that the lower the EF levels, the more youth homeless engaged in risky behaviors; and the higher the EF levels, the less they were involved in risky behaviors. Even though a limitation of the study was that most of the participants were African American, it highlights the risks homeless youth may face due to their living conditions. In retrospect, Herbers et al. (2014) also found that EF, was a central component of self-regulation in homeless children, which led to better academic outcome and behavior management.

Cutuli et al. (2013) conducted a quantitative study to measure the academic achievement of homeless students compared to students below the poverty line and general students who were neither homeless nor below the poverty line. The goal was to examine if homeless students were at more risk of underachievement in math and reading than students who fell below the poverty line and if that risk continued with time. The researchers conducted a 5-year longitudinal study with 26,474 students. They measured

their initial academic achievement levels in third grade and their levels over time until eighth grade. Cutuli et al. hypothesized that homeless students would score the lowest in math and reading than students who were below the poverty line and general students. The researchers used Measures of Academic Progress (MAP; Northwest Evaluation Associate, 2005) to measure the reading and math levels. The researchers found that homeless students had lower academic achievement of reading and math than children who were 130% and 185% below poverty line and the general children who were neither homeless nor below the poverty line. The results persisted with time and the achievement gaps did not narrow over time. Improvement with academic levels were only seen when homeless students after they had been housed for a few years. Cutuli et al. suggested promoting resiliency to the students and their families to reduce academic underachievement in topics such as math and reading.

Interventions

There are no specific resiliency interventions that have been proven to promote academic success for homeless high school students (Mohan & Shields, 2014; National Center for Homeless Youth, 2014). There are only suggestions to resources, interventions, and strategies, that can build resiliency in homeless students and promote academic success (e.g., MTTS; student-centered approach, PBIS).

The Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTTS) is a framework that provides universal screening and documentation for students through a layered system that delivers assessments and interventions to ensure students succeed (Colorado Department of Education, 2015; Sulkowski & Beaulieu, 2014). The Positive Behavior Interventions and Support (PBIS) uses evidence-based strategies to support behavioral problems with

students (NCHE, 2014). School and educators can incorporate a student-centered approach to build positive relationships with the homeless students by being understanding, and by providing clear guidelines to behavior and academic expectations (NCHE, 2014). This gives a sense of belonging to the homeless students and builds positive relationship with educators and peers, which decreases any misbehaviors and increases the desire to learn and succeed.

Another suggestion of an intervention that can promote academic success is a cross-system collaboration (NCHE, 2015). The cross-system collaboration is a framework system which guides school stakeholders how to collaborate education and homeless services for homeless students to academically succeed (NCHE, 2015).

Some known factors that may promote academic success include stable housing, relationships (parents, mentors), environments (e.g., schools), and cognitive and social skills (self-regulation, determination; Hart, 2017; Herbers et al., 2014; NCHE, 2014). However, further research is needed on understanding the factors that promoted academic resiliency in some students to graduate high school while homeless (Hart, 2017; Rahman et al., 2015). The more school stakeholders (e.g., school counselors, policymakers) understand homeless students' experiences and the resiliency factors that promoted their academic success, the more researchers can develop interventions to ensure their academic success (Hart, 2017; Havlik et al., 2014; Rahman et al., 2015).

Success

According to the NCHE (2019), the years 2016-17 showed that 22,803 (36.3 %) out of 62,889 homeless high school students who were tested on state reading (language arts) had proficient scores. For the math tests, 16,625 (26.1%) out of 63,736 homeless

students received proficient scores; and in the science assessments, 15,413 (39%) out of the 39, 458 homeless students scored proficiently. This report is based on students who were enrolled in U.S. public schools within those years and identified as homeless under the MVA (NCHE, 2019). There remains a need to further understand the experiences of homeless students who academically succeeded, especially in a high school context (Rahman et al, 2015; Uretsky & Stone, 2016).

Homeless high school students are a unique population and interventions should be adjusted according to their needs and academic remediation (Uretsky & Stone, 2016). Schools are required under the MVA law to provide tutoring for homeless students to ensure their academic success and graduation. Uretsky and Stone (2016) suggested further qualitative research on the homeless high school students because we need better understanding of their academic experiences. Some researchers showed that even though homeless students are at high risks to academic failure, some do academically succeed (Herbers et al., 2014; Uretsky & Stone, 2016). This has led researchers like Masten et al. (2015) to raise questions such as what makes that difference. Even though a few researchers have identified resiliency factors which promoted their academic success (Clemens et al., 2018; Hart, 2017; Herbers et al., 2014), more research is needed to understand what resiliency factors allow some students to be academically resilient specifically during their high school senior year, and graduate high school (Akelaitis & Malinauskas, 2016; Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015; Uretsky & Stone, 2016).

Relationship of Education to Life Success

Education is one the significant factors to breaking their homelessness cycle (Ingram et al., 2017). Receiving a high school is crucial to end homelessness (Dukes, 2018). Students are more likely to be homeless later without a high school degree (Ingram et al., 2017). Statistics showed homelessness is 364% more likely to occur without at least a high school degree and education has the power to transform lives and end homelessness (Dukes, 2018). Students more likely to succeed and break their homelessness cycle by having a stable career or going to college (Ingram et al., 2017).

Uretsky and Stone (2016) suggested further research on the academic experiences of students who were homeless in high school. Understanding their perspectives can allow the school counselors to better prepare them to succeed and either continue higher education or find a stable career. This is important because without a high school education, students are more likely to be homeless later in life and education is one of the significant factors to break the homelessness cycle (Ingram et al., 2017). On the contrary, researchers have demonstrated that with an education, students are more likely to succeed and break their homelessness cycle by having a stable career or going to college. Statistics showed higher employment rates for individuals with a high school diploma vs. no high school diploma, and higher rates for those with a college degree, which is why it is important to get homeless students to graduate high school (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). Graduating high school gives these students higher chances of success in life (Scott et al., 2015). The first step is to get them to graduate high school and prevent them from dropping out (Ingram et al., 2017). There remains a lack of studies that focus on the academic success of homeless students rather than risks, and how academic resilience is

linked to homeless students' academic success there is a need to explore the academic success of homeless students (Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015).

Giving the Homeless Students Voice

While statistics play an important role in identifying and solving problems related to homelessness, giving voices to the homeless youth is essential for policymakers and educators to know the urgency of the homeless youth situation (Mohan & Shields, 2014). Education is a vital component that allows the homeless youth to overcome poverty and their homelessness situation, but school stakeholders need to believe in the homeless students' abilities and enforce the MVA to remove any barriers preventing them from succeeding. Barczyk et al. (2014) also emphasized that understanding homeless individual's strengths and perspectives can be a primary component to increase their motivation to make positive life changes. This is essential because homeless participants in the Brown (2017) study reported feeling misunderstood by their teachers, which created a negative perspective on education and the purpose of receiving an education. This sense of feeling devalued by their teachers caused a disconnection from the schools.

With the U.S. public schools being at a record high in the number of homeless students registered in the 21st century, the understanding of the socioemotional role of homeless students' education is essential (Brown, 2017). There is also a need for teachers and school personnel to be trained to work with homeless students and let the homeless students know they are heard. Brown (2017) stated that the context of homeless students' situation should be an urgent priority in the U.S. public schools, so they receive an education for a better future.

Other researchers who have listened to the perspectives of homeless students found that homeless students revealed a theme of loss and struggle due to the lack of stability, shelter, food, and other resources (Toolis & Hammack, 2015). Toolis and Hammack (2015) found the youth also expressed the stigma view society places on them such as being drug dealers, unmotivated, or disruptive which was misaligned with the reality of how these homeless youth viewed themselves. The homeless youth in the Mohan and Shields (2014) also shared their awareness of how society views them, as being unacceptable, but they remained hopeful and wanted to succeed. Researchers continue to emphasize the need to listen to the narratives of the homeless youth and the strategies they used to survive because they are an essential source to creating positive social change (Toolis & Hammack, 2015). Toolis and Hammack reported that not that being heard was the most painful element the homeless youth shared in this narrative and is it essential they be allowed to speak so their stories and are heard. It is essential to give those who lived the experience voice to share their academic experience. Their perspectives are essential for developing interventions to ensure their academic success (Cutuli et al., 2013; Havlik et al., 2014; Ingram et al., 2017).

Summary

The increase of student homelessness in the U.S. continues to be a problem (NCHE, 2019). Even though the USICH, along with its agency members have been trying to solve this problem, it continues to exist (Rahman et al., 2015). Homeless students are more likely to drop out of school than their non-homeless peers (America's Promise Alliance, 2016) Yet, despite the adversity homeless students face, some researchers demonstrated some homeless students show resiliency factors to overcome

challenges and graduate high school (Rahman et al., 2015; Masten et al., 2015). There is a need to better understand the academic success of some of the students rather than the risks, and the academic resiliency factors that promoted their academic success and graduated high school (Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015).

Havlik et al. (2014) highlighted that the more educators and homeless students' stakeholders understand homeless students' experiences, the more practices that can be developed to ensure their academic success. There is more research needed on understanding the academic resilience of homeless students and how it links to their academic success (Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015). Students who succeed in school despite the adversity are academically resilient. The focus of this study was on academic resiliency. The senior year is also the last and most recent experience they had as homeless students, which may add significance to capturing their experiences related to academic resiliency. It is essential to give those who lived the experience voice to share their academic experience, to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences their high school (Hart, 2017; Toolis & Hammock, 2015). Chapter 3 will cover the qualitative methodology and a thorough explanation of how the data were collected.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Homeless students face challenges that threaten their educational outcomes, and they are more likely to drop out than their nonhomeless peers (Ingram et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2015). Researchers have recently become interested in studying resilience in homeless students because despite adversity, some homeless students academically succeed and graduate high school (Clemens et al., 2018; Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015). Academic resilience is a major factor that sets apart students who succeed from those who fail, and homeless students who graduate from high school are considered academically resilient (Hart, 2017; Cassidy, 2016). More research is needed to understand the academic resiliency experiences that link to the educational success of homeless students who graduated high school (Hart, 2017; Havlik, 2017; Rahman et al., 2015; Uretsky & Stone, 2016). The findings can benefit policymakers and school stakeholders (e.g., school counselors), by developing interventions that foster resilience, and to provide the necessary services to ensure their academic success (Clemens et al., 2018; Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015). Senior year in high school is their last year before transitioning into adulthood and planning for career and college services and receiving a high school education is a primary step to break their homelessness cycles (Hart, 2017; Rahman et al., 2015). The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate despite adversity.

This chapter includes the following sections: (a) the research design and rationale, (b) role of the student-researcher, (c) methodology used for data collection and analysis,

(d) trustworthiness, and (e) ethical considerations. I conclude Chapter 3 with a summary and a transition into Chapter 4.

Research Design and Rationale

Research Question

RQ: How do former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school tell the stories of their experiences that promoted their high school graduation?

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate despite adversity. To do that, I used a narrative approach to listen to the stories of their experiences (see Clandinin, 2013). Students who are homeless and still graduate are considered academically resilient (Hart, 2017). There is a need to gain a deeper understanding of how homeless students develop academic resilience that promotes their academic success and graduate from high school (Hart, 2017; Rahman et al., 2015). Understanding the resiliency factors that link to their academic success and high school graduation can benefit policymakers and school stakeholders with developing interventions that foster resilience (Uretsky & Stone, 2016). A deeper understanding of homeless students' experiences can assist school counselors in better understanding homeless students' needs and services to ensure their academic success (Havlik, 2017). To understand the contexts in their stories about what promoted their graduation, I found a qualitative narrative study to be appropriate because I needed to capture the first-hand accounts of the participants and gain an understanding of the broader sociopolitical and personal factors that helped shape their experiences.

Researchers who take a qualitative approach seek to understand how individuals make meaning of their experiences (Ravitch, 2016). Qualitative researchers emphasize context as a central component of understanding an experience or phenomenon and believe there are multiple truths and perspectives rather than one universal truth (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Qualitative researchers value knowledge construction about a specific phenomenon (Ravitch, 2016). While quantitative statistics play an important role in identifying and solving problems related to homelessness, qualitative studies give homeless youth a platform from which to be heard by decision makers (e.g., policymakers and educators; Mohan & Shields, 2014). Giving voice to homeless students can inform decision makers about the urgency of the situation. Qualitative studies shed light on how some homeless youths overcome challenges (Toolis & Hammack, 2015). A deeper understanding of how homeless students develop academic resilience is essential for developing interventions to ensure homeless students' academic success (Hart, 2017; Cutuli et al., 2013; Havlik et al., 2014; Ingram et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2015). The first step is to get them to graduate high school and prevent them from dropping out (Ingram et al., 2017). This is important because without a high school education, students are more likely to be homeless later in life because education is one of the significant factors to break the homelessness cycle (Ingram et al., 2017). Gaining insights from the participants under study offers great promises for social change (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016)

There are several approaches to conducting qualitative studies: narrative inquiry, case studies, grounded theory, ethnography, and phenomenology. For this study, I found narrative inquiry to be the best approach to gain an in-depth understanding of the social,

cultural, familial, and institutional contexts that helped shape the individuals under study (see Clandinin, 2013). Case studies would not have been appropriate for this study because one important aspect of case studies is studying events, individuals, or multiple cases that are in progress (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Grounded theory was not selected because the idea was not to develop an emergent theory. Ethnographic research involves interactions between people who are often observed during their day-to-day lives and emphasizes culture. This approach/design would not have worked because I was going to be (a) listening to participants' stories of their past experiences; and (b) considering contexts besides culture, such as social and institutional contexts.

I seriously considered phenomenology for this study because it involves exploration of a specific phenomenon shared by individuals and the common themes in their experiences (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). A phenomenological approach may have worked because it addresses the lived experiences of the participants through in-depth interviews. However, I built on Hart's (2017) study, who applied a phenomenological approach to understand how students developed academic resilience factors that linked to the high school graduation of formerly homeless students. Hart focused solely on intrinsic motivations that promoted their individual resilience. The data analysis in Hart's study showed there were external drives as well, which some participants shared. The researcher did not elaborate on those findings because it was not the purpose of the study. Clemens et al. (2018) suggested the need to explore all the contexts of academic resiliency (individual, relational, external) that may have promoted the academic resiliency in some homeless students, which I did in this study.

Narrative Inquiry

Other reasons researchers apply a narrative approach is because they aim to understand the rich experiences of participants by listening to their stories within the context of the time, location, and other people in the story (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006). Narrative researchers can then capture the social, cultural, familial, and institutional contexts that helped shape the individual under study (Clandinin, 2013). The authors (Connelly & Clandinin, 2006) discussed the various contexts within stories: personal and social (interaction); past, present, and future (continuity); and place (situation). Researchers seek the interactions within stories to look at the personal conditions (e.g., feelings, thoughts, hopes, morals) and to look outwards for social conditions (e.g., the environment and other people).

The aspect of continuity in narrative research suggests that people focus on the past to remember experiences and feelings of past events through the present and can provide knowledge for the future (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Narrative inquiry allows researchers to understand a phenomenon in a holistic way that is not otherwise understood (Clandinin, 2013). Researchers who apply a narrative inquiry approach get as close to the experience as they can (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Applying narrative inquiry as a methodology helped explain the various contexts that may have promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate despite adversity. Applying narrative inquiry as a method provides essential and rich context to the literature (Creswell & Poth, 2017; Ravitch, 2016). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that narrative inquiry has two starting points: either beginning the study while living the experience or listening to past

experiences in a story form. Researchers who listen to stories of individuals' experiences can form their questions to unfold all the contexts within a story. Etherington (n.d.) gave examples of this by asking questions such as "tell me about a time" or "what happened then" to capture temporal contexts; or "who were you with" to capture other individuals in the stories. It is vital to listen to the narratives of homeless youth's experiences because they are a source for creating positive social change (Mohan & Shields, 2014; Toolis & Hammack, 2015). Gaining a deeper understanding of their experiences is also essential for developing resiliency interventions to ensure their academic success (Cutuli et al., 2013; Havlik et al., 2014; Ingram et al., 2017).

Role of the Researcher

I took on multiple roles in this study. One important role is that of the primary instrument in a qualitative study (Ravitch & Carl, 2016), where the researcher is responsible for analyzing the participants' interpretations of their stories (Wang & Geale. 2015). Researchers who apply a narrative approach form a relationship with participants and collaborate about the meaning of their experiences, constantly interpreting the participants' past stories from a present perspective (Clandinin & Huber, in press). Other roles I took on were as a student researcher who collected data from young adults who were homeless for at least a month during their high school senior year and graduated and a learner who tried to understand the contexts of participants' stories. I have previous experience with homeless individuals during an internship in 2017 with a homeless outreach organization. I did not have any previous relationships with the participants, nor had power or control of the participants who shared their stories (see Creswell & Poth, 2018; Ojinta, 2018).

Reflexivity is an essential process of a qualitative study. It helps the researcher manage their biases, views, and experience that they bring into the study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It begins with the researcher discussing previous experiences of the phenomenon under study and how they may shape their current perspectives of the phenomenon. I journaled biases such as thoughts, feelings, or assumptions that emerged throughout the research process and data analysis to manage any biases.

Researchers may give participants a gift card of reasonable value for their time and effort (University of Berkley, 2017). At the end of the interview, I provided the participants with a $10 gift card to Starbucks. This amount seemed reasonable because I took between an hour to 2 hours of their time. To ensure the ethics behind the incentives, the participants were able to receive the $10 gift card if they chose to withdraw from the study.

Methodology

In the following sections, I discuss the participant selection logic, instrumentation, procedures for recruiting participants, and data collection. I also discuss the data analysis plan before moving on to issues of trustworthiness.

Participant Selection Logic

Population

The target group for this study were five former students between (age 19-40) who were homeless during their senior year of high school and graduated despite adversity. A small number of participants in a narrative study is acceptable due to the rich information collected through stories (Clandinin, 2013).

Sampling Strategy

I utilized purposeful and snowball sampling to recruit participants for this study. Purposeful sampling is often used in qualitative studies (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Researchers apply purposeful sampling to recruit individuals for specific reasons that stem from the research questions. One of the reasons is that they lived the experience and can provide knowledge about the phenomena. According to Woodley and Lockard (2016), researchers use snowball sampling to recruit populations that are hard to reach or hidden. The authors discussed how snowball sampling was used in a research study by one of the authors who was having difficulties recruiting participants in a hard-to-reach population. The researcher reached the required number of participants after sharing with her hairdresser the challenges she was facing recruiting participants. The hairdresser acted as a mediator between the researcher and the participants that met the criteria the researcher was seeking (Woodley & Lockard, 2016). Snowball sampling is a beneficial method to apply when the phenomena under study may be kept undisclosed by the participants who lived the experience, which is common in the homelessness context due to various reasons such as being stigmatized by society (Etikan et al., 2016; Ingram et al., 2017).

Criteria for Selection

The criteria for participants were that they were former students between (age 19-40) who were homeless for at least one month during their senior year of high school yet graduated high school. I selected this age range for several purposes. First, it is to ensure they were over the age of 18, which makes them a less vulnerable population. It also increased the likelihood they already graduated high school while they were homeless,

which is how they are considered academically resilient according to the literature (Hart, 2017; Rahman et al., 2015). This age range is also close to the time of their experience, which may allow them to recall the experience better. The minimal timeframe of being homeless for at least one month during their senior year of high school could have provided valuable information regarding their experiences, since homeless students' academic success is threatened even after a week of being homeless (Ingram et al., 2017). Their status (e.g., married/single; secure job/unemployed) was not part of the inclusion criteria. The exclusion criteria for this study were those who are under or above the age range described, were currently homeless, were not homeless for at least a month during their senior year of high school and did not meet the inclusion criteria discussed. Participants verified they met the criteria by signing the informed consent, which included the participant criteria.

Sample Size

The determination of sample size in qualitative research should be consistent with the methodological approach used for a study and the rich information that will be provided (Vasileiou et al., 2018). Typical qualitative narrative studies require three to seven participants (Ojinta, 2018); The number can be as small as one or two (Creswell, 2013). The target number for this study was five participants. This small number of participants is acceptable because researchers focus on each individual's in-depth experience by collecting data through their stories (Clandinin, 2013).

The participants were identified as those who contacted me through my contact information listed on the flyers or posts and showed interest to be participants for this

study. I then contacted the participants by phone or email to set up a date and time agreed upon to conduct the semi-structured interview either face-to-face, phone, or Skype.

Data Saturation

In qualitative studies, there is a relationship between the sample size and data saturation (Ravitch, 2016). Qualitative researchers are not concerned with the sample size being too big or small as much determining if the sample size that will meet data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Data saturation is met when the researcher is no longer collecting new data, and no new themes are likely to develop. I stopped collecting data once I reached that point of data saturation.

Instrumentation

One of the primary tools for collecting data in qualitative research is through one-on-one interviews (Ravitch, 2016). For this study, I collected data from each participant using the semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A) as a tool developed by the researcher, followed by probing questions. The interview guide was reviewed and approved by committee members to ensure its consistency with the research question.

Narrative inquirers collect in-depth information by listening to the stories of the participants in the past being told in the present (Clandinin, 2006). A researcher-developed instrument should use the literature to ensure validity (Stadtlander, 2015). The interview questions (Appendix A) were adapted from the literature and the framework that assisted in defining the concepts of this study: According to seminal authors discussed in theoretical framework, Resiliency Theory is based on three levels of resiliency (individual, relational, external; Masten, 2018; Shean, 2015); and the literature discussion of the need to gain deeper understanding of how homeless students foster

academic resilience to academically succeed and graduate high school (Gupton, 2018; Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015). Researchers who apply a narrative approach also negotiate the meaning of the stories being told by the participants to establish content validity and maintain the trustworthiness of the data (Clandinin, 2016; Hoyt et al., 2006).

Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection

For this narrative inquiry study, I collected data from five former students between (age 19-40) who were purposefully selected through criterion sampling and snowball sampling if I did not have enough participant response from the flyers (Ravitch, 2016; Woodley & Lockard, 2016). I asked homeless organizations that provide educational support and services for homeless youth if they would post the flyer (Appendix B) at their physical locations and email it to individuals who previously received assistance from their organization. The flyers were also posted on Facebook. The flyer included a summary of the study, which was seeking former students between (age 19-40) who were homeless for at least a month during their high school senior year and graduated despite adversity. The flyer also included my relevant contact information. Once potential participants contacted me with interest to participate, I reached out by phone or email and set up a date and time agreed upon to conduct the semi-structured interview either face-to-face, phone, or Skype (Iacono et al., 2016). Skype is an effective alternative to conduct qualitative interviews when face-to-face interviews are not available due to reasons such as geographical barriers between the researcher and participant. Iacono et al. (2016) stated that the participants in their study who were interviewed over Skype seemed less worried about time and more comfortable in the environment the interview was taking place, such as their home.

The data collection frequency was a one-time interview that took between one to two hours. At the beginning of the interview, I went over the study, informed consent (Appendix C), answered any questions they had, and went into the interview questions. During the remainder of the interview process, I listened to the participants tell the stories in their own ways about the experience and asked probing questions for more details about the phenomenon (Reissman, 2008). The interview was recorded with an audio-recorder which was later transcribed by a professional transcriber.

A few strategies were applied to end the interview. First, I briefly reminded the participants how sharing their experiences with me may benefit others living the experience since the literature states the more school stakeholders understand homeless students' experiences, the more they can develop resiliency interventions and provide services to ensure their academic success (Hart, 2017). I told the participants that I might contact them if I have a question about something they said, for clarification as I am analyzing the data.

I also explained to the participants that sharing their stories may spark negative thoughts or feelings; should that occur, to contact one of the counseling services on the list that I handed them. The interview ended by thanking the participants for their time once again and sending them their $10 Starbucks gift card.

Data Analysis Plan

The data were coded to align with answering the research question. One of the goals for narrative inquirers is to understand the content of what is said in the data (Reissman, 2008). Reissman (2008) stated that thematic analysis is a common method of analyzing data when applying a narrative approach. Researchers who apply thematic

analysis should not expect a set of rules for the data analysis process, as several elements guide the process, for example, the theoretical framework, epistemology, and research question(s) for the study (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Reissman, 2008).

After the audio-recorded interviews were transcribed, I hand-coded the data. By hand-coding, I stayed close to the data, so I can understand the overall context and its meaning, rather than just reviewing the codes a software generates (Elliot, 2018). I used Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis. I selected this method of analysis because it aligned with this study's design, and the authors explained how thematic analysis could be used in different ways due to its flexibility (e.g., inductive vs. deductive or theory-driven data). The authors also discussed how both inductive and deductive analysis are applied during data analysis because researchers always bring something to the data. The authors referred to bottom-up analysis, where researchers generate codes and themes from the data itself; and a top-down analysis, where codes and themes are generated from concepts and ideas that researchers bring into the data (e.g., codes related to the theoretical construct). Researchers cannot fully separate from either approach but can prioritize one over the other.

After I generated themes from the data and articulated the results of the study, I applied Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry. The narrative analysis gives the researcher a window into a critical event that shaped the individual or experience under study (Clandinin, 2013; Ojinta, 2018). During this analysis stage, I gathered and analyzed the rich details in each participant's story (e.g., time, place, plot, and scene; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 2006; Ojinta, 2018).

Type of and Procedure for Coding

I found Braun and Clarke's (2012) views of the six-step thematic analysis appropriate for this study because they provide a detailed structure to move through the data. I found this helpful as a novice researcher. For each participant's transcript, I applied the following six phases.

Phase 1: Familiarization With the Data

The first step was to read the printed transcript several times and become familiar with data. Braun and Clarke (2012) also suggested listening to the audio recorded interview at least once while reading the transcripts. While actively reading the data, I made notes and highlighted areas that may be of interest for the analysis process as I read the transcripts during this initial stage. Braun and Clarke suggested asking questions such as how does this participant describe their experience? What kind of world is revealed through their narratives?

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

During this phase, I continued data analysis by coding (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Codes are identified phrases or words that are labeled with potential relevance to the research question (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I hand-coded the hard copies of the transcripts during this stage and highlighted the texts that generated codes. As I read throughout the transcripts, I continued to generate new codes according to the data and used the same codes where applicable. Generated codes may be modified; this stage will end when relevant data is fully coded (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

This phase was the process of moving codes to themes. I began to construct themes by moving and clustering codes that shared features together. This stage also involved starting to consider the relationships between the themes and how they tell the story about the data. Braun and Clarke (2012) also suggested having a miscellaneous theme that includes codes that may not be relevant at this stage; these codes may end up as themes or discarded. I analyzed and reported data that were related to the research question and phenomena under study.

Phase 4: Reviewing Potential Themes

This phase was about quality checking. This was done by comparing the themes to the coded data and data set to ensure the themes related to the data. One of the questions to ask during this phase was: Is this a theme or just a code? Are there enough data to support this theme (thin or thick)? Some themes may be joined to form a broader theme (Braun & Clarke, 2012). Once I had a set of themes coherent with the extracted data, I performed a second stage of coding by rereading the entire data set to ensure the themes captured the important elements and overall tone of the data, relevant to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

It is important to name and state the importance of theme. A good thematic analysis will have themes that are focused on the study (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The themes may be related but do not overlap, may build on the previous literature, and address the research question. As the researcher, I used the data to tell a story as data do not speak for themselves. Braun and Clarke (2012) discussed that some form of latent

meaning of the content will take place even when we are trying to present the data in descriptive analysis. A good theme will be concise and informative while maintaining the voices and concepts of the participants.

Phase 6: Reporting the Findings

This purpose of this final phase was to provide a compelling story based on the data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). I used the three-dimensional space narrative structure approach to report the findings (Clandinin & Connelly, 2002; Wang & Geale, 2015). To make sense of an event or person, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) outlined various contexts in narrative thinking (temporal context, spatial context, and contexts of other persons). During the analysis, the researcher analyzes the interaction (personal and social) and continuity (past, present, and situation/place; Wang & Geale, 2015). The personal interaction involves the researcher analyzing internal conditions such as feelings, while social interaction entails that the researcher analyzing other peoples' interaction in the experience (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Wang & Geale, 2015). The researcher also analyzes the actions of the past and present, and their likelihood of occurring in the future, and the situation or place in the storytellers' experiences and how they may have impacted the experience (Clandinin, 2013; Wang & Geale, 2015). During the data analysis, researchers may find that some participants had different experiences than the rest of the sample, referred to as discrepant cases (Stadtlander, 2015). Researchers should also pay attention to obvious differences that may be the reason for discrepant cases, such as an age difference than the rest of the sample. In my study, there were no discrepant cases.

Issues of Trustworthiness

There are several approaches qualitative researcher can apply to ensure trustworthiness of their studies (e.g., credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability; Ravitch, 2016).

Credibility

To ensure credibility, researchers should apply strategies to ensure minimal bias and be confident in their findings as truthful (Johnson & Rasulova, 2016). A strategy I used was member checking. According to Ravitch and Carl (2016), researchers can apply member checking to decrease any form of researcher bias in research study by receiving feedback from the participants about the accuracy of the data. I used member checking by emailing the participants the transcripts. Ravitch and Carl suggested specific questions to ask during member checking such as:

- Does this transcript reflect and resonate with your perspective? How might it differ and why?
- Is there anything that this transcript does not capture? Is there anything that I am missing?

Transferability

Transferability will be possible when I provide the reader of the dissertation thick descriptions and excerpts from participants' stories, so readers can make sense of the context and the settings as they apply to their situation (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This was established by providing a thick description of the background of the study, methods, and participant selection. I also provided a thick description of the settings of the interviews, description of the stories, and results. Additionally, I provided a thick description of the

research process and the participant' stories (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Other readers can then determine whether the findings of this study are applicable to their specific study.

Dependability

To establish dependability, I explained why the methods selected for the study were appropriate according to the purpose of the study, the research questions, and data collection (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I consulted with the committee to critique the research design and to know what other methodologies or limitation exist in the study. This approach of ensuring the methods chosen to answer the research question of this study allows a researcher to achieve dependability in a research.

Confirmability

To establish confirmability, Ravitch and Carl (2016) suggested that researchers apply reflexivity throughout the research process. Reflexivity is the researcher's awareness of how their personal identity, assumptions, positionality, and subjectivity can interfere with the meaning and interpretation of the data. Hence, I noted down any personal biases that occurred during the interview, the settings of the interviews, and relationship with the participants in a personal journal (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Ethical Procedures

In the Institutional Review Board (IRB) application, I included the documents of agreement to gain access to participants. I waited for the IRB approval and adhered to their standards in conducting this study. It is important that the researcher is transparent with the participants to develop a relationship of trust (Wang & Geale, 2015). I did that by ensuring the participants were aware of the purpose of the study, the purpose of their

participation, their rights to drop out of the study, and answer questions they have. Participants could have withdrawn from the study and still received their $10 gift card without any consequences. Some participants may have found it emotional telling their stories which may have posed an ethical risk. The participants had the opportunity to get a break from the interview if needed and were provided with a list of outside resources that provide support.

The researcher also has the responsibility to protect the dignity and privacy of the participants (Wang & Geale, 2015). I did that by assigning pseudonyms for each participant to protect their identification at all times. The participants were informed that data will be shared with the committee members and audience who will read the study. Their information was protected and secured with key accesses only available to me. The participants were also be informed that their information will remain confidential and will not be used for purposes outside of this research study.

Participants were informed prior to the interview of the nature of the study, its duration, and how the data will be used. Participants knew they may withdraw at any time from the study without any consequences. The data were stored in my personal laptop with password protection. Physical data (e.g., field notes or printed transcripts) were locked in a cabinet inside the researcher's home office. I was the only one that knew the password and had a key to access the data. All data are to be destroyed after 5 years of the study.

Summary

This chapter was focused on the research design and the rational for conducting this study. I used qualitative narrative inquiry to gain a deeper understanding of the

experiences that informed former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate, despite adversity. This chapter provided the data collection plan, data analysis, how trustworthiness will be established, and recruitment plan. Lastly, it included the steps that were taken to ensure I adhered to IRB guidelines, and the ethical treatment of the participants and the data. Chapter 4 includes a discussion of the data collection.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate despite adversity. The research question was:

> RQ: How do former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school tell the stories of their experiences that promoted their high school graduation?

To answer this question, I used a narrative inquiry approach to gain a deeper understanding of the broader sociopolitical and personal factors that helped shape the experiences that promoted their high school graduation. I analyzed the data using Braun and Clarke's (2012) six-step thematic analysis and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry structure. Chapter 4 includes a detailed description of the study, the settings, and participants' demographics. This chapter also includes an overview of the data collection and analysis process, evidence of trustworthiness, and results. Chapter 4 is concluded with a summary of key findings related to the research question and a transition into Chapter 5.

Setting

The setting for this study took place online using either Skype or the telephone depending on the participants' preferences. Face-to-face interviews were not possible due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two participants selected Skype video while three participants preferred not being seen and did not have strong Internet connection, thus choosing a phone interview. The participants stated they were home where and felt

comfortable and had privacy. At the beginning of the interview, the participants were reminded this interview would be recorded.

Demographics

I conducted the study with five participants between the ages of 19-40. The participants consisted of four females and one male. All participants shared a background of having been a homeless student in the United States for at least a month during their senior year of high school, yet they graduated. Each participant was in a different state during the time of the experience. However, the MVA law applies to all U.S. public schools.

Table 1

Participants' Average Length of Homelessness

Participant	Average length of homelessness	Gender
Participant 1	6 months	Female
Participant 2	6 months	Female
Participant 3	8 months	Female
Participant 4	8 months	Female
Participant 5	2.5 years	Male

Data Collection

The study began after I received approval from Walden's IRB (Approval # 05-13-20-0873944). The process from recruitment to data collection completion took approximately 5 months. I contacted several homeless organizations to post the flyer on their premises and sent a mass email to individuals who formerly used their services. I

also posted the flyer on my personal social media (Facebook and Instagram) account, and other homeless organization pages. I collected data from five participants who had contacted me by email with an interest to participate, using the semistructured interview guide as a tool I developed, followed by probing questions. The narrative researcher asks questions based on the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space to gain a deeper understanding of the personal, social, and place circumstances in the stories that helped shape the individual and experience under study (Clandinin, 2013). I collected data from my home office, and participants selected a location that was comfortable for them and had privacy.

I recorded two interviews through Skype and recorded the remaining three phone interviews with a phone recorder and a backup computer recorder. The one-time interviews for each participant took between 1 to 2 hours. The participants received their interview transcript for member checking within 2 weeks following the interview. All participants confirmed the accuracy of the transcript before I moved to the data analysis process.

There were two variations from the data collection plan presented in Chapter 3: age group and data collection method. There was a change made to the outer age group due to receiving several requests from potential participants who were interested in participating but had exceeded the initial upper age limit of 24 years old. Because the federal law for homeless students did not indicate an upper age limit and the law was existing during the senior year of the upper age participants, I determined that a change to my participant criteria would not interfere with the purpose of the study, which was to interview individuals who were homeless during their senior year of high school. I

contacted the IRB with a request for the change. At this point, I had asked a few homeless organizations that provided educational support and services for homeless youth if they would post the flyer at their physical locations and email it to individuals who previously received assistance from their organization. The flyer was also posted on social media. Once I received approval, changes were made in the recruitment forms and recruitment resumed with the new upper age limit. I updated the homeless organizations I had already contacted with the new forms, updated the flyer I had posted on my social media with the new outer age limit, and sent them to homeless organizations I had not yet contacted. I also informed a participant who had expressed interested to participate that their inclusion was permissible now and scheduled the interview. There were no unusual circumstances that occurred during the interview.

Data Analysis

For this study, I analyzed the data using Bran and Clarke's (2012) six-step thematic analysis and Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative space inquiry. The data were hand-coded through an inductive lens approach. However, I simultaneously coded deductively as necessary and made notes, as researchers always bring prior knowledge on the topic (Braun & Clarke, 2012). I also made notes according to Clandinin and Connelly's three-dimensional narrative space inquiry (e.g., sequence of events, other people in the stories, and places). I highlighted words and phrases in each transcript that generated codes. I used Post-It Notes to write the codes and reasons, and a different color sticky notes for thoughts and feelings. This allowed me to ensure I was coding as close to what was being said rather than personal biases once I moved to second cycle of coding. I stuck Post-It Notes on any word, phrase, or area that I coded

with information on who the participant was (e.g., P1), the page number (Pg.), and paragraph where coding occurred (Par.). This was done in case sticky notes fell off the document and so that once I moved further into the data and saw previous codes noting patterns, I knew whether it was a new code or already captured. I repeated the coding process until no new codes emerged. I knew some codes might be discarded later but as Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested, it was better to code as many as needed during this phase, specifically codes relevant to the research question.

I then extracted the highlighted words or phrases that generated the codes into a separate Microsoft Word document. Braun and Clarke (2006) defined data extract as "an individual coded chunk of data, which has been identified within, and extracted from, a data item" (p. 2). I reread the extracts of each developed code as I was moving them into Microsoft Word document. I also reread Post-It Notes relevant to the code and its extract. As the coding process was still progressing during this step, I generated new codes and modified existing ones (Braun & Clarke, 2012). I printed the Word documents where the codes and their extracts had been transferred to. I stuck the printed documents on large wall for sticky notes and stuck the colored Post-It Notes next to its relevant code and data chunk. I took notes of any potential themes that started to develop; however, I did not immerse in that process yet. I also took notes of the chronological order of a story (beginning, middle, end) and the various dimensions under the three-dimensional narrative analysis space structure. Braun and Clarke's six phases provided clear guidelines to move through the data analysis process. In Table 2, I present a synopsis of the six phases and how I moved through them.

Table 2

Phases of Thematic Analysis

Phase	Examples of procedures for each step
1. Familiarizing oneself with the data	Transcribing data; reading and rereading; noting initial codes
2. Generating initial codes	Coding interesting features of the data in a systematic fashion across the data set, collating data relevant to each code
3. Searching for the themes	Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme
4. Reviewing the themes	Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set; generate a thematic "map"
5. Defining and naming themes	Ongoing analysis to refine the specifics of each theme; generation of clear names for each theme
6. Producing the report	Final opportunity for analysis selecting appropriate extracts; discussion of the analysis; relate back to research question or literature; produce report

Note. Adapted from Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77-101.

Phase 1: Familiarization With the Data

This phase included repeated reading of each transcript and writing ideas that came to mind or for the coding process later (Braun & Clarke, 2012). It is a vital phase for the researcher only. The purpose was to become intimate with the data and use the notes later during the coding and analysis phases. After each interview was transcribed and member checked by the participant, I began Phase 1 by immersing myself with the data. I listened to the interview while reading a printed version of the transcript. I started highlighting and making notes either on the document or sticky notes of areas that may be of interest or related to the research question or ideas for coding. As Braun and Clarke

(2006, 2012) suggested, I asked myself questions such as how does this participant describe their experience? What kind of world is revealed through their narratives? What does this mean?

I continued to immerse myself in the data by reading the printed transcript without listening or watching the recorded interview. I focused on what the data meant and what kind of world the participants were revealing through their stories. I made further notes and highlights. I moved to Phase 2 after I was familiar with the breadth and depth of what was being said (see Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes

I began this phase by intentionally reading to code. The transcripts were hand-coded and I used different colors to differentiate the codes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). The codes were data-driven and developed on a sematic and latent level, meaning not only the surface of the words but beyond what was being said. The codes were relevant to the research question, repeated phrases or sentences throughout the data, or content that emerged as unique or surprising. I repeated the coding process until I was sure each transcript was coded.

Phase 3: Searching for Themes

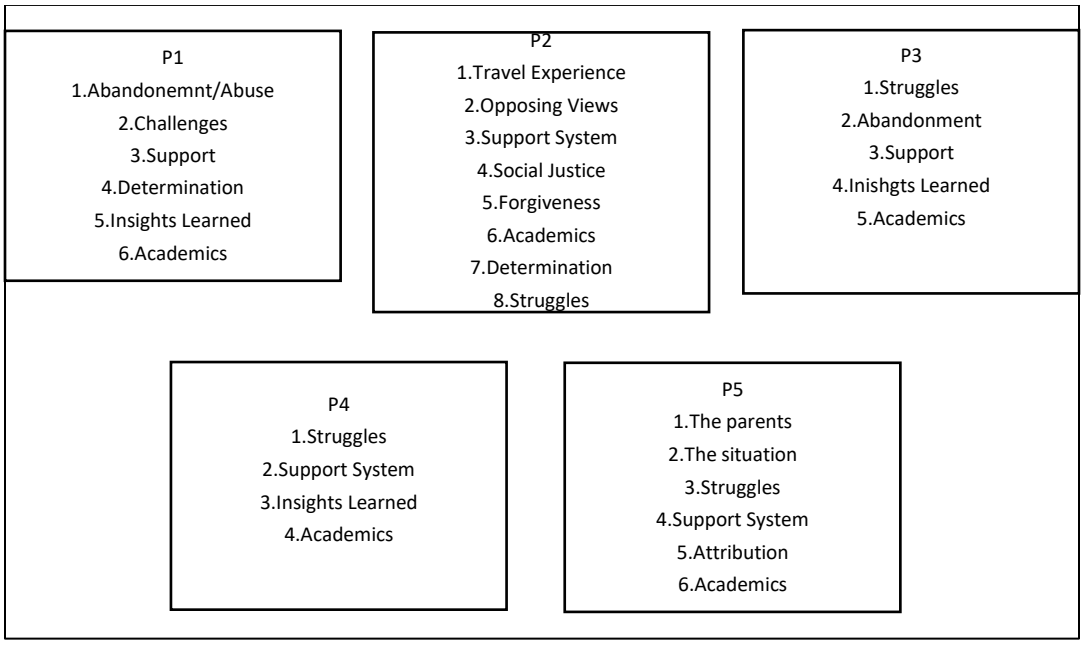
This phase was the process of moving codes to potential themes. I began to construct potential themes by moving and grouping codes that shared features together. For example, codes such as *abuse* and *abandonment* were highlighted in red and grouped together whereas any types of support the participant received were highlighted in green and grouped together. Each theme had a color. I developed the themes for each participant separately before looking for common themes across all transcripts to make

sure I did not miss any important themes that may have been shared by one participant and not the other.

As I moved through each transcript, connections between participants' narratives started to form. I noted the patterns and connections in addition to highlighting the same previous theme color or new ones. As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2012), the themes began to connect to one another and tell a story of the overall data. This phase ended with notes of potential themes in each story. A miscellaneous theme was also developed that included codes that may be of interest or discarded at a later stage. Subthemes did not emerge in this stage. However, I continued making notes on how the stories fit into the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space structure (see Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Next, I wrote the potential theme for each participant on a large sticky note and hung them on the wall (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Potential Themes for Each Participant



Phase 4: Reviewing Themes

This phase included the revision of potential themes generated in the Phase 3. The revision was done by comparing the data extracts in each participant's story in relation to the potential themes already generated. This phase included asking questions such as "is there enough data to support this theme?" This process of revision resulted in merging themes into broader themes. Any theme that did not have enough data to support it was discarded, although most of themes were moved into broader themes. For example, rather than "travel experiences" for P2, this theme was moved under the broader theme "Insights." Since all participants shared their insights of their experience and how it shaped them into who they are today. Other themes such as "Abuse" and "Abandonment" were moved into the broader theme of "Challenges" since each participant faced challenges during this experience. The themes were refined and rewritten as:

Common Themes Refinement:

- Becoming Homeless
- Challenges of A Homeless Student
- Support System
- The Senior Year/Academics
- Insights Learned

Phase 4 included another level of analysis, where the entire transcript for each participant was reread once again to ensure the themes so far captured the significant elements and tone of the story and related to the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012). This process preserved their narratives and validated the themes developed across the data as trustworthy. As in the previous phase, I noted different contexts within

participants' narratives. I also noted any thoughts that came to mind about how the data related to the theoretical framework or literature. This was another reason for selecting Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-step thematic analysis, since the researchers stated that we always come to our data with some previous knowledge of the topic. The continuous reflexive journaling assisted me being transparent about the data analysis and remain focused on the data in front of me. Notes in the journal were used during a later analysis phase.

Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes

This phase consisted of an ongoing analysis of the common themes developed in Phase 4. This phase is where the deep analytical work occurs in a thematic analysis and consisted of several steps (Braun & Clarke, 2012). First, researchers go back to the data extracts that formulated each theme and conduct another level of detailed analysis to ensure rich details are included, and to structure them in a chronological order. Braun and Clarke (2012) described this step as, "There is an interweaving of detailed and specific analysis of what happens in a particular data extract, and more summative analysis that illustrates the broader content of the dataset in relation to the theme," (p. 10). This process of telling an analytical narrative around the data extracts should be applied in each theme, and each theme should then have a connection to the other themes for an overall story of the data, while addressing the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

Because this phase required writing detailed analysis, it is difficult to separate it from phase six (Braun & Clarke, 2012). I moved Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry structure to this phase to analyze the data extracts that formulated the themes. Researchers often combine narrative analysis with thematic

analysis to aid in analyzing the data and uncover common themes of specific details in experiences while preserving sequences in stories (Onjita, 2018; Reissman, 2008). Researchers can combine a descriptive and conceptual/interpretive analysis to present the overall patterns across the data and a detailed analysis of the extracts, moving beyond the surface of what is being said to latent meanings (Braun & Clarke, 2012). One way of analyzing data to move the latent meanings of the data is using a framework to organize the data (Braun & Clarke, 20012). The three-dimensional narrative structure can be used as a framework to organize data and re-story the key events and elements of a story in a chronological order (Ollerenshaw & Creswell, 2002).

At this point in the three-dimensional narrative inquiry structure, I had developed five themes the from the previous phases of Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis: Reasons for Becoming Homeless; Challenges of A Homeless Student; Support System; The Senior Year/Academics; Insights Learned.

In this step, I combined Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative inquiry structure with Braun and Clarke's (2012) thematic analysis, to conduct another level of analysis on the data extracts and to structure them in a chronological order. As I had been making notes according to Clandinin and Connelly's three-dimensional narrative space inquiry (e.g., sequence of events, other people in the stories, and places) throughout the data analysis process. I reviewed the notes in my journal, sticky notes, and on the transcripts. I began highlighting the data extracts with different colors for each dimension in Clandinin and Connelly's three-dimensional structure (Table 3). Clandinin and Connelly (2000) use the term dimension when referring to interactions, continuity, situation/place in their three-dimensional narrative structure. For example, I

highlighted the social interaction data extracts in green, which referred to other people mentioned in the participants' stories, red for to continuity (past, present, future) and so on.

Then, I grouped the highlighted data extracts into categories based on which reflected the dimension in the structure (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Once I was completed analyzing the data extracts using the dimension in the structure, I began to uncover details that were not captured in the previous thematic analysis phases. For example, while analyzing the social interactions' dimension to look at other individuals in their stories, I analyzed the teacher P4 described in her story as an important detail to that may be related to answering the research question. Her teacher was not included in the previous theme of Support System, which is the theme that included most of the people participants described in their stories. After several new insights, realized there may be other specific details that I have not captured in the previous analysis steps.

Table 3

The Three-Dimensional Space Narrative Structure

Interaction		Continuity			
Personal	Social	Past	Present	Future	Situation/ place
Look inward to internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions	Look outward to existential conditions in the environment with other people and their intentions, purposes, assumptions, and points of view	Look backward to remembered experiences, feelings, and stories from earlier times	Look at current experiences, feelings, and stories relating to actions of an event	Look forward to implied and possible experiences and plot lines	Look at context, time, and space situated in a physical landscape or setting with topological and spatial boundaries with characters' intentions, purposes, and different points of view

Note. Adapted from Clandinin & Connelly, 2000

Because this phase was the final level of analysis, I decided to do one final step before I report the results to make sure I did not miss any particularities in their stories that may be related to answering the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012). I printed a copy of Clandinin and Connelly's (2000) three-dimensional narrative structure (Table 3) for each participant. I reread each participant's transcript and simultaneously filled in their table, with keywords related to the dimension they belong in and organized all data accordingly (Table 4). For example, I wrote down how each participant described their thoughts and feelings in their story under the personal dimension and organized their

stories in their chronological order using the continuity dimension of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space and categorized their stories using: (a) past, (b) present, and (c) future (Table 4). I did that until all dimensions in each participant's stories were filled in their copy of Clandinin & Connelly's three-dimensional narrative table. Some researchers refer to this process as narrative coding (Reissman, 2008). Although each participant had their own copy of the three-dimensional table filled out according to their own stories, I presented a sample of codes from each participant's table and combined them to show what this looked like (Table 4).

Table 4

Example of Analysis of the Data by Filling the Three-Dimensional Space Structure

	Participant responses					
P1	Determined to better herself through education Confusion/stressed Academics easy for me Looking forward	Guidance counselor Aunts and grandmother Controlling mother/Abused by mother's boyfriend Friends/teachers	Bright student Felt isolated /Short-tempered Kicked out by mother and stepfather	Psychological effect of experience better but still present In college for social work or psychology, still deciding Grandma still main support system	Major either psych or SW Career helping homelessness	Texas School/class Friend's house /Parent's house
P2	Always been academically gifted Terrified	Best friend / Friends at shelter School staff Mom and stepdad/grandparents	Kicked out for not giving up baby for adoption Difficulty as homeless senior/experience at the shelter	Currently doing master's/volunteers Still talks to Donna/teachers	To pursue PHD Continue standing up for inequality	School Shelter
P3	Grateful Vulnerable in senior year Depression/suicidal	Support of family support who took her in The gangster forced her to do things	Became homeless after Mother died/father incarcerated Being made fun of by other students	Still grateful and in touch with that friend and family that supported her	Will always be grateful to the family And rely on God	High school The family's house/The gangster's house Organization
P4	Determined to succeed Depression/ Aggressive	Mother/father Friends	Became homeless due to abusive father	Grateful to God/mother/ family who took them in Government support needed seek people's support	experience continues shaping her continuous support system and faith	Senior year/school support Motel/park San Diego
P5	Always looking forward strong believer Understanding of self and others always look for positivity	Uncle/ mother and father Friends/teacher	felt equal in school Became homeless after parents left him alone Sharing stories as main source of support	Still thinks sharing his stories was the key Volunteers others in similar situations and provide support	Wants to be a father one day and do better than his father did To continue supporting others	The school Uncle's house Georgia

Thematic analysis was an ongoing process in data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). I began to see similarities to the previously developed common themes except with richer details. Next, I did a cross-check across participants' tables and began analyzing both similarities and differences (Reissman. 2008). Since participants constantly went back and forth in time as they told their stories as homeless students in their senior year, once their narratives were organized in the continuity (past, present, future) dimension of the table (Table 4) I was able to see the chronological order of their stories (beginning, middle, end). From that, analyzed that the sequences of events that happened in their stories were in the same order across participants. For example, all participants had conflict with or related to parents/ before becoming homeless. Once they became homeless, they described similar emotions that time (e.g., scared, confused). Next, they all informed another person in their lives that they have become homeless, which led to staying at a place for the remainder of the year and then going back to school. All participants informed the school they were homeless students. These patterns of similar events and sequence were present throughout their stories. There were similarities of the interactions and situation/place as well. By combining thematic and narrative analysis, I was able to capture the particularities for each participant as well. Narrative analysis considers the presence of themes in a broader context, but pushes into further exploration (Reissman, 2008). This means I analyzed the differences within the similarities of interactions and situation/place of each participant's experience as they unfolded in similar sequences (e.g., the other people each participant described, places, feelings). For example, who participants first told were different people and so is where

they stayed. Another example is even though all participants informed their schools they were homeless, the respond they received from their schools were different.

During this analysis step, I combined narrative analysis with thematic analysis to aid in analyzing the data and uncover common themes of specific details in experiences while preserving sequences in stories (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Onjita, 2018; Reissman, 2008). In this last step of Phase 5, I refined and renamed the previous common themes into the final themes based on combing both data analyses: The final themes (a) From a Nonhomeless to Homeless Student, (b) Speaking Up as a Homeless Student Senior, and (c) Graduated High School and Shaped by The Experience. I rewrote each theme using the three-dimensional approach so that I could restory the stories (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). To preserve the participants' voices which is a critical aspect in narrative analysis and emphasized by Braun and Clarke (2000), Each theme included the dimensions in the three-dimensional narrative structure, so that I could re-story the stories and include (e.g., sequence of events, other people in the stories, and places). Continuity is an essential part of narrative inquiry researchers can choose how to present the theme based on a certain structure. I selected to arrange the themes in a chronological order which is often used in narrative analysis and aligns with both analyses used this study (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Braun & Clarke, 2012). Braun and Clarke (2012) suggested to rename the themes with titles that illustrate their overall meaning, while staying close to the participants' stories within that theme (Braun & Clarke, 2012).

To align with both methods, I renamed the themes with titles that illustrated a chronological order and narrative format, while preserving what stories the participants'

shared within that theme. Each theme had a story around it while preserving details and sequences in stories, and then a connection to the other themes for an overall story of the data, and addressing the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Onjita, 2018; Reissman, 2008). Within each theme are the interactions, continuity, and situation/place that participants shared in that timeframe (see Table 5).

Table 5

Final Themes

Final themes	Three-dimensional Narrative Inquiry Structure
From nonhomeless, to a homeless student	• Interactions Personal *P1- confused/disbelief* *P2- confused/terrified* *P3-depressed/suicidal* *P4-frustrated* *P5-alone* Social *P1-mother and stepfather* *P2-mother and stepfather, unborn son* *P3-mother and father* *P4-mother and father* *P5-mother and father* Place/situation *P1- senior year; Texas;* mother and abusive stepfather asked her to leave *P2- senior year; Pennsylvania;* becoming pregnant *P3-senior year; North Carolina;* mother's death and father incarnated *P4- senior year; California;* abusive father so left with mother *P5- sophomore year; Georgia;* abandoned by both parents due to marriage issues and lack of finances
Speaking up as a homeless student	• Interactions Personal *P1-my homeless experience shaped me/psychological effects/forgave others* *P2-hardships shape who I am/forgave others* *P3-closer to God/always work hard/grateful* *P4-the experience shaped me/views education as a right to all/grateful* *P5-being shaped by the experience/proud of his graduation accomplishment/understanding of self and others*

	Social P1- school, friends, friend's mother, aunts, grandmother P2- shelter, girls in the shelter, son, Donna, grandparents P3- friend, friend's family, organization P4- mother's friend and her family, school, mother P5, mentors, friends, teacher, uncle Place/Situation *P1- grandma's house /college* *P2-/living with Gavin's father and other children\ finishing master's degree/volunteering* *P3- lives with daughter/graduated university and working* *P4lives with daughter/graduated college* *P5- his own home stable career/*
Graduating high school and shaped by experience	• Interactions Personal *P1-my homeless experience shaped me/psychological effects/forgave others* *P2-hardships shape who I am/forgave others* *P3-closer to God/always work hard/grateful* *P4-the experience shaped me/views education as a right to all/grateful* *P5-being shaped by the experience/proud of his graduation accomplishment/understanding of self and others* Social *P1- grandma, family, teachers* *P2- grandparents, gain still important, some teachers, and donna going to her wedding for example* *P3- strengthened by the contrary when not in touch with teachers, but with the family, and grateful for the organization* *P4- that family- her mother- maybe God too- her friend* *P5- uncle and the influence of mentors and now he mentors* Place/Situation *P1- grandma's house /college* *P2-/living with Gavin's father and other children\ finishing master's degree/volunteering* *P3- lives with daughter/graduated university and working* *P4lives with daughter/graduated college* *P5- his own home stable career/*

2

Next, I included a brief definition to describe the essence in each theme with some quotes from the participants. A detailed description of the results will be included in the results section.

Final Themes

The following are the final themes:

1. From Nonhomeless, to A Homeless Student
2. Speaking Up as A Homeless Student
3. Graduated High School and Shaped by Experience

Theme 1: From Nonhomeless, To A Homeless Student

This theme was developed as all participants began their stories around the they time homeless, after asking the open-ended main interview question, "Tell me your story of being a student from as far back as you can remember" (Appendix A). Timeframe is an important aspect in narrative research to understand how individuals make meaning of their experiences (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The main open-ended interview question did not specify nor lead the participants to begin their story as homeless students. The participants described the state they were living in at the time, their situation prior to being homeless, and the reasons that led them to becoming homeless. They also expressed personal interactions of how they felt once they became homeless.

For example, P4 began the interview by reporting,

> When I was doing my senior year, my… there were marital problems between my mom and dad. So my dad had lost his job and he was so much into alcoholism,

> but he would he would beat my mom. In evening when I was coming from school…she just told me that we had to go.

P1 began her interview by describing herself in the past as, "When I was in elementary and most of middle school however, I was in a private school. And so I was told by every single teacher I had I was a bright student." A few sentences later P1 reported,

> So I was about 18 years old when I went homeless. On Monday, November 6th I woke up as if it was a normal school day… I was told that I had to be out of my mom and her boyfriend's house, by 3:00 p.m.

The personal interactions in this theme were similar thoughts and feelings expressed by the participants such as displayed (Figure 2). For example, P3 expressed, "The day I was homeless were very, very, very scary because I have no one to run to. I was even falling into depression. I even thought of committing suicide."

Some of the examples of places /situation that are included in this theme after the participants became homeless, is how P4 described it as, "We went into a park … we would spend our time all during the day and night there and it was very cold."

A detailed analysis of their interactions and situations/places that occurred in the beginning of their experience are included in the Results section. This theme ends and transitions into Theme 2, to describe what happens next in their stories and how the participants described their experiences.

Theme 2: Asking for Help as a Homeless Student

This theme is a continuity from Theme 1 of what happened next in their experiences and considered the middle part of their stories. This theme was developed as

all participants spoke up about their homeless situation and asked for help which led to going back to went back to school, and stories of being homeless seniors.

For example, the social interactions were similar, where three out of five participants first informed their friends about their situation. P1 described it as, “And that’s where I found my friend. And I told her hey, I need help. I was kicked out my house last night… Her mom said yes, that I could and stay with her”. P2 described telling her best friend as, “I had my best friend who lived right up the street… We started looking at homeless shelters together. She’s the one who drove me and my belongings to the shelter that I ended up at.” Another example of the commonalities within this theme is that all participants informer their teachers of their situation as homeless students.

In the results section for this theme, I reported the stories of the participants asking or help and all their shared stories of what happened after that and throughout the senior year. I included the particularities of the places/situations and personal and social interactions as described by each participant, in their sequential order (Figure 5). This theme concludes the past experiences of being homeless students and transitions into Theme 3 which is after they graduated high school as homeless students.

Theme 3: Graduated High School and Shaped by Experience

This theme was developed as a continuity of Theme 2 and described the end of their past experiences as former high school seniors who were homeless and graduated high school. This theme also included the present and future in the continuity dimension of the three-dimensional narrative inquiry space (Figure 5; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). To really understand a phenomenon, narrative inquirers analyze the past and present, they

analyze the likelihood of some contexts described by the storyteller, to occur in the future (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin, 2013; Wang & Geale, 2015).

All participants described their present situations at the time of the interview. This theme included how some participants described their past shaped their present, and how the past and present may shape the future (Clandinin, 2013; Wang & Geale, 2015). For example, P1 expressed her past experience shaped her present decision to major in Psychology, so she can help others in similar situations in the future.

> Can I say that my experience being homeless helped shape my decision? Yes. Because without that background, I don't think I could have come to the decision that I wanted to do psychology … so that I can help people who are in a very similar situation to what I was.

Another example of how various contexts in the past were also described in the present and in the future, is P4 describing the past social interaction of the girl she met at the shelter who became a surrogate mother to her to still be in her present life and described a future event of that individual. P4 reported,

> I'm still friends with her. I'm actually going to her son's wedding at the end of the year. It's these kinds of important relationships that at the time maybe seemed like nothing, but really, really changed the course of my life … And to this day she's like a surrogate mom for me.

The results section will include an in-depth analysis of their present and future and how they are tied to their past experiences while homeless student. This theme was concluded with insights the participant gained from their experiences.

Because Phase 5 and 6 were combined to produce the final analysis, the last part of Phase 6, which is reporting the results is included in the Results sections below. The final themes in the results section presented in a chronological order and include a story around it and then a connection to the other themes for an overall story of the data, and address the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). There were no discrepant cases in my study.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

My role as the narrative inquirer was to co-construct the participants' stories during data collection and data analysis. To make sense of an event or person, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) outlined various contexts in narrative thinking (temporal context, spatial context, and contexts of other persons). Researchers who apply a narrative approach also negotiate the meaning of the stories being told by the participants to establish content validity and maintain the trustworthiness of the data (Clandinin, 2016; Hoyt et al., 2006). Several strategies were applied that ensured evidence of trustworthiness, credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Credibility

To ensure credibility, I used member checking as a strategy to minimize biases. Each participant was emailed their interview and asked if it resonated with their perspective, if anything was missed, or not captured. I asked the participants such as

- Does this transcript reflect and resonate with your perspective? How might it differ and why?
- Is there anything that this transcript does not capture? Is there anything that I am missing?

Once the participant responded with a confirmation of the accuracy of the transcript, I moved into the data the analysis process.

Transferability

Transferability was possible by providing the reader with thick descriptions and excerpts from participants' stories, so readers can make sense of the context and the settings as they apply to their situation (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I achieved transferability by providing a thick description of background of the study, methods, and participant selection. Additionally, a thick description of the setting of the interviews, participant selection, detailed contexts of the stories, and results were provided. By providing the mentioned details and how stories were analyzed to understand the phenomenon under study, other readers can determine whether the findings of this study are applicable to their specific study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Dependability

To establish dependability, I explained why the methods selected for the study were appropriate according to the purpose of the study, the research questions, and data collection (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). This approach of ensuring the methods chosen answered the research question of this study allowed the researcher to achieve dependability in the research study (Ravitch & Carl). Additionally, dependability was established by consulting with the committee to critique the research design and to know what other methodologies or limitation existed in the study.

Confirmability

Conformability was established through reflexivity throughout the entire research process (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). I remained aware of how personal identity, assumptions,

positionality, and subjectivity might interfere with the meaning and interpretation of the data. I noted down any personal biases that occurred during the interview, the setting of the interviews, and relationships with the participants in a personal journal (Korstjens & Moser, 2018).

Results

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate, despite adversity. I conducted Skype or telephone recorded, semi-structured interview with five participants, lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. I used a semi-structured interview guide (Appendix A) developed by the researcher and approved by the committee, followed by probing questions to gain a deeper understanding of the personal, social, and place within the stories that helped shape the individual and experience under study (Clandinin, 2013). The following research question guided this study: How do former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school tell their stories of their experiences that promoted their graduation?

Upon the completion of the interviews and the coding, I analyzed participants' stories using thematic and narrative analysis, and was able to gain an in-depth understanding of how their told stories of their experiences that promoted their graduation. By using both types of analyses, I was able to capture the thoughts and feelings, other people described in their stories, the places, and sequence of events in each participant's story to developed themes in a broader context while analyzing the particularities for each participant as well. The final level of analysis resulted in three

themes (Table 5) present in all the stories: Theme 1: From a Nonhomeless to Homeless Student; Theme 2: Speaking Up as a Homeless Student; Theme 3: Graduated High School and Shaped by The Experience. Because the themes are written based on the three-dimensional narrative structure (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I included the meaning of each dimension again as a reminder for the reader what the terms refer to when used.

Interaction

Personal: Look inward to internal conditions, feelings, hopes, aesthetic reactions, moral dispositions.

Social: Look outward to existential conditions in the environment with other people and their intentions, purposes, assumptions, and points of view.

Continuity

Past: Look backward to remembered experiences, feelings, and stories from earlier times.

Present: Look at current experiences, feelings, and stories relating to actions of an event.

Future: Look forward to implied and possible experiences and plot lines.

Situation/Place: Look at context, time, and place situated in a physical landscape or setting with topological and spatial boundaries with characters' intentions, purposes, and different points of view.

Theme 1: From a Nonhomeless to a Homeless Student

This theme was developed after a common theme across the participants after being asked the interview question. Three of the five participants began their interviews

by immediately describing their past experiences of the time they became homeless students. The two other participants began their interviews by describing themselves as bright students during their elementary and middle school years but transitioned into the stories of becoming homeless students in just a few sentences into the interview. The participant also had common themes of the time situation/place, other people involved during this beginning part of their experience, and sequences. This theme included the contexts in Figure 5 of the beginning part of their experiences written in a story format.

P1

P1 was a high school senior student who lived with her mother, brother, and stepfather. She began telling her story by referring to herself as "a very bright student" in middle school but swiftly moved to telling her homeless experience. When she was a high school senior student, she lived with her mother, brother, and stepfather before she became homeless. She described the parents as, "The parents were the ones making the mess and leaving it for the kids to clean up … I could sincerely say we were beaten was some of the punishments … abused as well." She reported her mother had control over her life and the stepfather was abusive towards her and her brother.

The mother was described as

> She basically had all control over my life. She basically turned me into a Cinderella. I wasn't allowed to go to work. I wasn't allowed to go to church. Which I was religious at the time. Still am. And the home had to be clean otherwise I couldn't do, I couldn't even really go to school. She actually threatened to keep me home from school because I wasn't cleaning on her schedule.

The role of the stepfather was described as

> So he was the main contributor to me going homeless was the, was the abuser of me and my little brother.… He would do anything in his power to basically turn us into his slaves. If he says jump my mom says how high? if he tells me and my brother jump, we're supposed to say how hig2h. But we're the, we're the type of siblings that are strong willed… We're the ones that say well why do I have to jump? Give me evidence as to why I have to jump … he didn't want me in his life. He just wanted, he wanted somebody he could control. And because he couldn't control me, and being in the house, he couldn't control my little brother either because I was in my little brother's ear like hey, you, don't let him control you.… He's the one that put the idea in my mom's head to kick me out of the house.

P1went on to describe the day she became homeless in details. She expressed,

> On Monday, November 6th I woke up as if it was a normal school day. I was getting ready for school and everything else. My mom's car wouldn't start. So I, me and my little brother ended up staying home. However about, I think it was maybe 10:00, maybe noon, I don't remember exactly. But it was somewhere early that day. I was told that I had to be out of my mom and her boyfriend's house, by 3:00 p.m.

P1 continued to describe details of the day she became a homeless student, including her personal interactions once she left the house.

> I packed up what I could into a large duffle bag … and by 3:00 I was walking out of the door.…I was walking along the main road in Texas, I didn't know what it

> was going to be like going into it.… Because I was just terrified. I was all alone and trying to figure out like where I would be sleeping.… I was just stressed and I was crying. All that stuff ... I was mostly in a state of disbelief…that my mom would actually kick me out of the house, because I was being a teenager.

P1 reported she intended to contact a friend, but a woman who saw her walking on the road stopped her. She reported the social interaction that occurred between her and that stranger and how it led to the next place in her story.

> The night I was kicked out, I was walking along the main road in Texas, and this person was pulling out of a little cottage subdivision, called Leeway Cottages … she stopped me and she's like, hey, do you need a ride somewhere? And I said yes. And I got, we put my bag in the back, in the trunk. And she asked me where I'm going. And I said I'm going to the local library I need to get a hold, I need to, log into the computer and get a hold of my friend because my mother just kicked me out of the house … and she said, "You have a place to stay tonight?" And I said, "No, I don't.… I would be sleeping on the library benches." And she said, "Okay. I can give you a bed tonight."

P2

P2 was a high school senior who lived with her mother and stepfather. Similar to P1, she began her story by describing herself, "I have always been an academically gifted student… from early as I can remember, in elementary school." She had done a lot of traveling throughout her life by the time she was a high school senior student. She reported her stepfather's job required frequent traveling and that her mother and

stepfather were always supportive of her academics even when they moved to different countries.

> I did a little switching around between schools.… In middle school I spent a year in Indonesia as an ex-pat because my stepdad worked for Lockheed Martin…Education was always important to my family … and I took all my books and work with me to Indonesia.… My mom was able to take over, we just did like a home-schooling situation.... My stepdad would help me with some of the history and math stuff. She would work with me on the science stuff.… Never once did I feel like I wasn't fully supported in any academic pursuits.… Even growing up, because of the honors classes that I had taken, they were always pushing for me to you know, excel as much as I could.

P2 then described how traveling influenced her views of her parents, and often described as "conservative or Christians" and expressed her personal interactions towards the world, described as "unjust or unfair." She reported,

> So it was the last year of middle school when I moved to Indonesia.… We had a huge house, maids, drivers…I mean you felt like American royalty. At the same time, it opened up my eyes to just completely different ways of life.… I had never seen the kind of poverty.… My mom and stepdad are white and privileged and there was no conversation about what I was seeing.… I think it's when I started realizing that there was more in the world than just the white born-again Christian perspective ... they were hurting people with their beliefs … all these experiences were just another page in the book that made me realize that you know, life is just unfair, systems are unfair, it is an unfair world and it's our duty to make it less so.

P2 and her family returned to the United States and eventually she became pregnant during her junior year. “Then my junior year was the year that I got pregnant with Gavin.” She reported the family wanted her to give the baby up for adoption and used their educational support to try to convince her. The baby’s father also wanted her to give up the baby for adoption. She refused to give up her baby which she expressed was the reason to becoming homeless.

> Never once did I feel like I wasn’t fully supported in any academic pursuits. And I think that’s why when I was pregnant with my son, that was their, that was their bribe was like we’ll pay for you to go to school, 100% as far as you want … but you’re not keeping the baby.… I told the baby’s father and my family that, that was not something that I was going to be doing.... And they kicked me out. So I became homeless in the beginning two months of my senior year of high school.… I think I ended up keeping my son because I felt like I had no one. I had no one else. And he was going to, it was going to be him and I against the world … it was a really awful time of my life. That senior year was rough.

She expressed her personal interactions right after becoming homeless as “I didn’t know what it was going to be like going into it. Because I was just terrified. I was all alone and trying to figure out like where I would be sleeping.”

P3

P3 was a high school senior student who lived in an apartment with her mother and father. Her mother had cancer and died during her senior year. P3’s father was involved in gang related activities that eventually led him to getting incarcerated. P3 reported she had no family around that were there to help her. She did not have money to

pay the apartment rent without both parents nor could she afford to buy food, so she had to leave the apartment and that is how she became homeless. She described becoming homeless as,

> My dad has been incarcerated. My mom is dead now. So it was a challenge.…And you see because the reason at my place there was no … no … nothing to eat and you see the house … house rent wasn't paid.… And you see at that time the funds were not there. Money was a problem ... my parents are not there to take me.…My relatives they weren't that close to my parents, so no one … to be there for me.… I had nowhere to go.…I would sleep there in the streets because I had nowhere…. Yeah that's what happened in my senior year.

P3 described her personal interactions the day she became homeless, including the situation/places in her story.

> The day I was homeless, they were very, very, very scary because I have no one to run to. I was even falling into depression. I even thought of committing suicide no one there for me.… I would sleep there in the streets because I had nowhere… So I even went to the street, even at one time slept … a place where there is a lot of rubbish thrown, it wasn't that easy because I had nowhere else to go and you see you're not too safe out there … at one time slept in a … in a … next to a pigs in town.

After being in the streets, P3 continued to describe another situation/place and interaction she had in the beginning of her homelessness experience,

> When I was … during my senior year, some people learned to take advantage of me because I was at that time not very mature and I was that vulnerable girl.

> There were these guys from the neighborhood, but it was those gangster people, so he knew what had happened to my family.…Yeah, he was a carefree person. So like he would force me to do favors for him. He would pretend to give me money. You see at that time I really needed a lot of money to support me.

P4

P4 was a high school senior who lived with her mother, father, and brother. She reported her father became an alcoholic and abusive towards the mother once she lost his job. She reported coming home from school one day and the mother informed they are leaving the father and left that day. P4 was the only participant who was an accompanied homeless student, meaning having a parent/guardian, while homeless. She described this situation as,

> When I was doing my senior year, my … there were marital problems between my mom and dad. So my dad had lost his job and he was so much into alcoholism, but he would he would beat my mom. In evening when I was coming from school … she just told me that we had to go.

She described her personal interactions that day as,

> It felt like God had abandoned us actually. It felt like now my education was going to come to a stop there.…So it wasn't that good an experience…It was frustrating … it was a pathetic situation that I would not really wish to relieve actually and or wish it on anyone.

P4 reported the situation/places in the beginning of her experience of becoming a homeless student,

> We stayed in the motel for like a week, but the money she had now was all gone...then we went into a park …we would spend our time all during the day and night there and it was very cold.

P5

P5 was a high school student who lived with his mother and father. He expressed his parents did not have time for him because they constantly argued. He shared that he has been lacking parental care since he was a child anyway. He expressed these views of his parents before becoming homeless.

> My dad didn't have enough time for me … because he was in this constant disagreements with my mom, so was my mom too, not more time for me. So I was just like behind on parental care for me. It wasn't good enough to call like whatever a child should receive.

P5 expressed that because his parents argued so much, they eventually decided to separate by leaving the house and leaving him there without letting him know where they went. He expressed this is how he became homeless in his sophomore, but the remaining stories in his experience were primarily of what happened during his senior year. He described the situation that led him to becoming a homeless student as,

> I became homeless because my dad and my mom they were in constant disagreements, so there's no way they could be together, so they parted ways, they moved far away.…So we were in a rental, a rental apartment. So there was no … no more payment of that … that place, so there's no way that they could live there. You know? So time to contact my parents, they have moved, they are

> … aren't even to disclose their location, exactly where they were, they are, so there's nothing I could do. That was my situation, just homeless.

P5 expressed his personal interaction of the day he became homeless as,

> But no more be family, you know?... For me I can say that was one of my worst days. I felt like there was nobody on my side. There was no one on my side. So I had nowhere to go, homeless.

Theme 2: Asking for Help as a Homeless Student

This theme is a continuity of Theme 1 and includes the chronological order of the situations/places and interactions described the participants. This theme is the middle part of their stories and began with "and then what happened?" The theme was developed because all participants asked for help after becoming homeless. P1, P2, and P3 asked a friend for help. For P4, it was her mother who called her own friend for help. Lastly, P5 asked his uncle for help. Once the participants asked for help, they described new situations/places and new interactions that occurred. The participants also described their experiences with school as homeless students stories and stories about the remainder of their senior year.

P1

P1 went to school the next day of being homeless and informed them of her situation and then talked to the friend she intended to talk to the night she became homeless. She reported,

> I went in and I said look, I just, I just got kicked out of my mom's house.… And I don't know when I'm going to get into a house. Or into, to my friend's house but I'm going to try today and all that. I basically was honest with them, and

> transparent and told them what was going on.…And that's where I found my friend. And I told her, "Hey, I need help. I was kicked out my house last night" … Her mom said yes, that I could and stay with her.

After P1 moved in with her friend and mother, she described social interactions of friends and family on continuing her school. Just to note, P1 told her story related to two sides of her family. Her mother and stepfather where she became homeless including her brother, and the family in the current state where she resides which consisted of her grandmother and aunts. At times, she referred to this side of the family as "family over here."

> I called my grandmother and I told her, Granny I'm having a hard time this pay period, can you help me out? And she was willing to help me out … my friend's mom she was telling me that I need to continue my schooling and my friend was also telling me because she was in the school at the same time that I was. And my family over here was telling me I need to continue my schooling.… I could tell I was well taken care of. That I was in good hands. The only thing then was to get my license and graduate college. Yeah. Or high school I mean. Not college. And to find a good school.

She also described how the social interaction with her friends in various ways from making sure she has basic needs such as food and hygiene products to helping her get her driving license.

> And one of my friends came in…she came in with two grocery bags … like the big paper bags. I mean like the big cloth bags that you can buy at checkout. She came in with two of those full of personal products. Like toothpaste, shampoo,

> conditioner, toothbrush, you name it. It was in there.… I was also trying to get my license at the time because my mom wouldn't give, help me get my license.… And one of my friends from work actually said that she'll teach me how to drive after work. She would let me drive her car home.

P1 also described the situation/place of her school and the social interactions in school after informing them of her homeless situation. She expressed her teachers were lenient on assignments and understanding of her situation. The teachers allowed her to seek other resources provided by the school whenever needed, such as seeing the school counselor. P1 also described other school staff at the school who helped her, but the main emphasis was on her teachers. Her math teacher was described as, "He was my source of humor for the day.… I would talk to him at least a couple times a week or see him a couple times a week and be in his class." Other teachers were described as,

> I was also getting help from, additional help from teachers like if, like teachers were a little bit more understanding because I went in the day after I was, I left my mom's house.… allow me to like go off and like talk to the guidance counselor about something that had just occurred … at this time we were looking up colleges that we could go to.… My art teacher was also there for me which, first period … he gave me more time on assignments because he kind of understood where my emotional state was.…And my prelaw teacher was also very understanding.

P1 also expressed some teachers as not understanding, "I did have a couple teachers that weren't very understanding of my situation at the time and that didn't really care. And those teachers are not a huge part of my life right now, or anymore."

Other interactions in her school were described as,

> I was also going to my school resource officer and, you know the person that basically helps kids that are in need? and she actually ended up giving me a pair of shoes. Couple, a few outfits. And she also helped me out with some more personal products. And made sure I was well taken care of our liaison, that's who was helping me with the clothes and stuff like that and the college stuff.

P1 also expressed her personal interaction and situation as a homeless student in senior year of high school.

> Once I became homeless. I could tell you my temper was a little bit shorter with all of my friends and stuff after it happened … so I wasn't getting much sleep being that I was a high school student and working late. So I would, I would fall asleep in his class.

P1 also expressed her personal interactions towards school.

> School was never hard for me … throughout my life I always wanted to be better. And that, the same thing was true after I was kicked out. I wanted to continue school, go to college, and you know, make a life for myself.… I knew that this was just something I was going to go through and I had told myself I just had to accept it.… I made sure I was a success story. And not a failed story

P2

Once P2 became homeless, she told her best friend what had happened, and her best friend helped her with finding a shelter for mothers who are pregnant and/or have children and would remain there the rest of her senior year. She reported that situation/place and the social interaction with her best friend as,

> I had my best friend who lived right up the street.… She was the only person that was really there for me, after my son's father abandoned me and my parents abandoned me…. We started looking at homeless shelters together. She's the one who drove me and my belongings to the shelter that I ended up at.

P2 stayed at a shelter for homeless women and single mothers where she would have her baby and remain till the end of her senior year. She reported that the shelter had some rules to ensure accountability and described the shelter as a comfortable living.

> They had a rule that you either had to be working, or at school.…We had to pay $50 a month of our welfare money as rent, to kind of foster some accountability there.… I feel really lucky because it was not a shelter in what you would imagine a shelter to be with like rooms full of bunk beds and people coming and going. This was like, every girl had a room with her baby … with a little vanity and a crib for our babies. It locked, we had locking doors … it was a very comfortable living situation for being homeless, a homeless shelter. It felt more like a sorority house. It was all unwed mothers ranging from my age, 16, 15-16 all the way up to 30's. And I finished my high school journey from there.

P2 reported her homeless shelter for pregnant women or single mother as a comfortable place,

> I feel really lucky because it was not a shelter in what you would imagine a shelter to be with like rooms full of bunk beds and people coming and going. This was like, every girl had a room with her baby. It locked, we had locking doors. Each room had like a little sink and vanity area and we had the public, the

> bathrooms were public…it was a very comfortable living situation for being homeless, a homeless shelter. It felt more like a sorority house.

Other interactions were described as, “I had some good times with the girls in the shelter… We were friends with each other. We supported each other.… It was really uplifting.” She described the interaction of other people such as a girl names Donna, her grandparents, and her son as,

> I had a gal who I met at the shelter who … she’s just one of many people that kind of influenced my path … and helped me overcome a lot of the difficulties… she was there to push me. She would check in with me and we would talk by phone couple times a week. I would see my grandparents, and we would go out to lunch or whatever … But for the most part, it was just all about school and taking care of Gavin … nothing else really mattered at that point.

P2 expressed her personal interactions regarding social interactions since she became homeless that point.

> And just realizing that there were strangers out there that will support me, you know, who were rooting for me, that even if I didn’t have my own family, there were families out there that would take me in and treat me like one of their own.

After she found the shelter, P2 informed the school of her homeless situation. She reported that her guidance counselor provided her with some knowledge of her rights and services as a homeless student, which included s being able to continue in the same school even with the address changed, transportation, and a weekly tutor. She described the transportation services as “Academically I mean that was, it was quite a year…you know, you dealt with your own transportation.” When I asked her to tell me more about

that, she reported that the school provided her with bus tokens for public transportation to go back and forth to school but did not provide the school bus as an option for school transportation. “They did not have an obligation to do, to provide like school bus.… Because I was outside of like whatever that radius was. And I think that’s where like the bus tokens came in … as an alternative.”

P2 did not attend school daily. She went to school only once a week because it was inconvenient to go to school and back to the shelter daily, with transportation. She described it as,

> I mean it was just one bus ride, but I still had walking to do on both ends to get to the bus stop. So like between the walking and then the bus ride waiting for the bus and then walking.… It ended up being like a four-hour round trip ordeal … it would have been unsustainable to do that every day, especially with a brand-new baby. I met with my teachers, exchanged a packet of work and pick up next week’s work. And we just kind of did that for the rest of the year.

The weekly tutoring service was described as,

> I was supposed to get a tutor, he was supposed to be doing all of that back and forth for me, that was an assurance that the district had made. They came out to the shelter once and that was it. So that’s why I kind of just dealt with it on my own, going back and forth.… And I mean it, ultimately it was fine. I was able to work with my teachers directly. The tutor was supposed to be like the liaison between my teachers at school and me at the homeless shelter. We just, you know once I realized they weren’t coming, I just did it myself with my teachers. We just cut out the middleman, and it was fine.

She began to describe the direct communication with teachers and their role towards her academics.

> But … the direct communication about my studies was with my teachers.… I had so much support from my teachers and the package of information they were giving me, I had the textbooks, I had the assignments, the same assignments that my peers were doing in class.… So I was able to finish all of my classes. Several of them were honors classes and AP classes...the teachers were probably the most instrumental part of that time of my life, helping to keep me on track and being supportive in whatever ways they could.… I really loved my teachers … I had a really great relationship with my teachers I had really wonderful teachers. They were extremely supportive.

P2 described other social interactions in school that contributed to her academic success and high school graduation, "I don't think I would have finished high school or my senior year without the support of my teachers and school staff." She expressed how school staff helped her based on their roles.

> The principal of my high school … never stopped rooting for me … the school counselor was great. She kind of helped me understand my rights in the beginning, and helped me get set up but she, at that point she was able to hand it off it my teachers. And I think because I was so motivated to graduate with my class, you know, I didn't really need her help. She did help me with my college applications and stuff. That was around the same time in the beginning of the year. And she was able to help me find scholarships and apply to those.… So yeah, I mean, the school had the resources to help me. And I was certainly

motivated by, I would not, I don't think I would have finished high school or my senior year without the support of my teachers and school staff.

P2 expressed the social interactions of friends at her school during that time.

That senior year was rough from a social standpoint.… I would see some of my friends from school when I would take the baby and go pick up homework and stuff.… I feel like because I had been pregnant in high school, I was kind of like nobody wanted to get too close … nobody who would like come to visit me, or you know, take me out when I needed to go food shopping or whatever … there was such a stigma of like we don't, we don't "do" that, and if we do, we send our girls away so that nobody has to see them … it was a really awful time of my life. Michelle, my best friend, she was the one like help get me through that.

P2 expressed her personal interaction on her senior year in general and reported,

In that one year I had, from like on the family side, I had lost my dad, found out I was pregnant, got kicked out of the house, and lived in a shelter.…You know, I have a lot of faults and I struggle with a lot of things, but commitment to my academics, despite everything that kind of went on in my life, has been a constant.… And I knew that an education was the only way that I could continue to provide for him, and he needed a good example.

P3

P3 experienced staying on the streets and then with the gang member for approximately two months before she ran away from the gang member's house and asked her friend for help. She described it as,

> Then after some … a few, let's say two … two months I managed even to run away.…Yeah. I start calling for help, yeah. I told my … this friend of mine how I was finding life hard, so she promised to talk to her parents and the parents decided why not come live with us for a while.

P3 reported she did not have support from family members and did nor describe as many as social interactions as other participants. The social interactions emphasized within her story were the friend she asked for help and her family. "My friend who I used to stay at their place, they encourage me, and her parents were very supportive.… They have been a strong pillar of me having succeeded in my life." P3 informed her teachers about her homelessness situation and they supported her with vouchers which she referred to as handouts. "I had told my teachers, but … so there would just give me handouts. small money to maybe help me for food."

P3 expressed she did not have to go to a shelter and described the help of a Christian organization during her high school senior year.

> I wasn't taken to somewhere else like the children's home.…I managed through thick and thin to continue my studies because the organization offered to pay for my fees.…The organization. I would say that it was just a blessing because it came at that time, I really needed it. Then they mainly to focus on educating children who are not able or who are, whose parents are not there.

P3 expressed her personal interaction regarding social interactions at school. "I wouldn't say I had no challenges.… At that time, now you have to like accept donation from other students … they neglected me … the others would make fun of me and that is over now."

P3 also expressed interactions with education during her senior year as a homeless student.

> Education has been very important to me.… I was mainly during the high school, I was mostly reading because I had to continue because it was my senior year.… I was never engaged in fun things, we focused on the schoolwork mainly.

P4

P4 reported that her mother called her own friend to ask for help after 2 weeks of staying between the motel and the park.

> Since we don't have a shelter on us, now she decided so let's call this lady friend and tell her what's going on … we stayed there. Then I … from there I was still able to continue with my education and I would stay.

P4 went to stay with the mother's friend. She expressed the social interaction of that friend and her family as, "this friend of mom was very, very supportive, very kind and her children were just the best." P4 described other social interaction during that time and described a friend she had.

> You see I had even this friend of mine who would give me some money. She came from a rich background, so she wouldn't feel like it was a struggle giving me money. She was very supportive, she would encourage me So this friend of mine actually until today we still remember how she was there for me in a big way, yeah, I am actually so grateful for her.

P4 informed her teachers that she was homeless. She described the school situation/place and the social interactions within.

I had informed my teachers what was going on and there were certain programs for the homeless students, it made me feel like I wasn't all alone. Because the teachers would, will make the homeless students feel even more welcome.…You see, teachers … teachers spend all the time with the students. So like and already know the students better so they can be… really share a lot, they can encourage. They can even helping in molding these person.… Like it was something out of the ordinary, at times also they would let homeless students to come to school and you could be given talks together … the counseling sessions that you are given really assisted me because in a way I think I was sort of going through depression.

P4 also reported her personal interactions at 2the time.

Well now you see, like get some areas in class when they're being taught, I would drift away and I would think, you know, my family problems, so I never got to understand some topics. So I now became more aggressive because I needed to achieve such result.

P4 added her personal interaction towards education.

I had that saying of education is key to success. So that was … I carried it all along . . . I would read about people who had succeeded.… I really needed to make my mom proud and I needed to get her out of that situation that she was in. But yeah, that is what basically I really wanted to achieve, but I had to like work hard and be very focused and to choose the right company and never let anyone to … just put me down despite my situation.

P5

P5 called his uncle at first and asked if he could stay with him. He said, "My first person I called was my uncle ... talked to my uncle, I'm coming over to which he says yes says, yes … I stayed with him several months." After P5 moved in with his uncle, he described an interaction with his uncle about attending school again.

> So I decided to live … to live with my uncle, like 1 week, 2 weeks. That was not good because, you know, life away from home is not good. So he said to me, son, you need to go to school. I said why? Now my parents are not there. Who will be taking care of me and providing. He said, no, there will be someone … something who will come for you.… I just decided to say, yeah, I … I will.…Then I made up my mind I said I must join school so that I can work hard, so that I can get what I can.

Once he joined school, he described this situation/place.

> So after joining school, that was when I felt like life will be better.… When you go to school you are just equal … at least I found some good shelter, good food at school because you know at school you are treated well.… So I decided to remain.

After several months of staying with his uncle, P5 stayed at a homeless shelter for a brief time. He often reported, "I just need to find my own shelter," throughout his experience. He referred to homeless shelters as "children's home" and described in brief the situation/place of a shelter.

> So I was just like let me say, let me look for a home wherever you can take care of people. Then I say, you know, this is children's home, yes? But how can I enter

> that? You made new friends over there at high school you know? Then they see that this boy, yes, he … he has parents, but just coming out of a home for the needy, you know?... I told myself to be man enough, you know.…I saw myself as a man enough not to go to a children's home or a rescue place because I thought that, oh, I may have an embarrassment.

After leaving the shelter he described P5 expressed a personal interaction as a homeless senior where he was in school one day and had a social interaction with a teacher whom he referred to as madame at times. He described this situation as,

> This teacher like back at high school, she was like, it was (madame) she was a good friend of me, yeah, let me just say because she used to talk to me … there's a day thoughts are in my mind.… I just think of things back at home, you know…. So like when I leave school like today, where will I go? Where will I enter? How will my supper be? Where will I eat dinner, get supper, you know?... So I just started crying.… Because you are a senior in high school, but you still don't have somewhere to call home. You still don't have somewhere stable ... this teacher … when she entered she saw me then … she told me, come here to my office and I said, okay, right.… When I went we just started talking.… Madame was like my mother … she was a good friend.… She was able to assist me if I could need something because I can remember she gave me some stuff, like school stuff, where I wasn't able to have them.

P5 also social interaction with friends in school and reported his personal interactions of not having a stable home at the time to invite his friends over rather than him only going to their places.

> I had many friends at school, my friends tell me, oh, then tomorrow can you come over … because there's no way I can tell my friends, yeah, you can come over to this place, pick me up. No I just felt like I was out of my mind … my friends came, yes, talk to me, some of which could understand, but there are others who would laugh at me, tell me you know this is not where you're supposed to be.… I lost some friends.

He added that his parents' friends would say about him "parents don't take care of him, he doesn't have a stable place to call it a home." Other social interactions with friends were reported as, "I had some friends who would take good care of me … there were some few friends I used to go to their homes and study because that was good because their parents were good in study stuff. "

He expressed he was involved in some school activities related to his faith.

> So I … I just was just a strong believer..at my high school, I used to be one of the front members on many things like missionary stuff and just preaching you know.… I used to sing while at high school.… I just was just a strong believer.

He also expressed his personal interaction as "shelter … was my first priority. I said, I need to work hard … say my own shelter like, you know, having my own stuff that I call home."

P5 added the role of the social interactions and his personal interaction of speaking up about his homeless situation.

> I didn't find that like a difficulty for me because I can say I had some people around me … many people that came my way, let me say, that uncle that I told you about … a few friends, schoolmates, teachers, you know? people believed in

> me … I wasn't ashamed to share with people my stories in just the open … they will offer an opportunity somewhere.

All participants graduated high school that year. In the next theme, I included their stories of how they described what graduating high school meant to them at the time. I also included the stories they shared about where they are now, after graduating high school as homeless seniors.

Theme 3: Graduated High School and Shaped by Experience

This final theme included the end of their stories. The participants ended their stories by describing where their present life, aspirations, and insights they learned from their experiences. All five of the participants stated how their experience as a homeless high school senior shaped them into who they are today. The participants also shared insights about the future that connected to their present and past experiences as homeless students.

P1

P1 is currently in college. She reported her college major in the present was selected so she help others in her career who are in similar situations as she was in the past.

> Can I say that my experience being homeless helped shape my decision? Yes. Most definitely I can say that. Because without that background, I don't think I could have come to the decision that I wanted to do psychology … so that I can help people who are in a very similar situation to what I was. And making sure they come out okay.

P1 also reported current personal interactions from her past.

> The psychological affects, they were, I'm still experiencing them but they were really bad for about two years. And … I could tell you, I wasn't ready for most of the stuff I went through. But I made it through and I can say that it has shaped me in a lot of ways. First with my emotional maturity. I see things in a different way.

She expressed gratitude to the social interactions described in her past as a homeless senior, and remains in touch with them in the present time.

> I'm still grateful for everything that both, that all of my teachers did for me. That my grandparent did for me, that my aunts did for me.… My grandmother and my aunts … were definitely people that were very crucial during that time, helping me, helping me graduate, and then once I graduated helping me get to Florida. That my friends did for me. They basically made me feel like I wasn't alone during that time … I still talk to… my friend that housed me for six months and the friend that helped me get the personal stuff … I don't even talk to the teachers that weren't helpful. However the teachers that were helpful I still talk to and talk about and, and they were basically a really big, they were a crucial role in shaping who I became.

P2

P2 also expressed personal interaction to how her experience shaped her in the present. She also described and how it may shape her future.

> I definitely think the hardships that I've dealt with and overcome shaped who I am. They definitely made me more resilient and more empathic and much more passionate about helping other people.… I think a lot of my life has felt almost purposeless and directionless, but I think for once I kind of feel like I can make a

> difference.… I feel like a lot of people don't want to talk about homelessness with, especially with children … but I also know I have to do something.… I'd like to make a difference. It is an unfair world and it's our duty to make it less so.

P2 also reported that she remains in touch with social interactions described in her past and how some will be in her future. She is now married to her the son's father who along with her parents did not accept her when she decided to keep the baby in her senior year. She described this situation as "things have really come 'full circle' for me. Yeah, we're together now. It's been over 5 years." She also reported remaining in touch with the social interactions of her teachers and friend she met at the shelter. I have teachers who I'm still friends with. I have books on my bookshelf from teachers with like inspirational notes written in them.… Even some I'm still friends with on Facebook and we still talk."

She described her present relationship with Donna, one of the social interactions she described meeting at the homeless shelter in the past.

> And to this day she's like a surrogate mom for me.… And I'm still friends with her. I'm actually going to her son's wedding at the end of the year. It's these kinds of important relationships that at the time maybe seemed like nothing, but really, really changed the course of my life.

P3

P3 graduated college too. She expressed the same organization that helped her with her high school fees also supported her college education. She expressed her life is stable and has a daughter too. P3 also described she has become closer to God. She

expressed the importance of working hard and having faith, including having the support nearby.

> It was actually the program that helped me to complete my university. Both my university and my high school so… and I am very grateful to them…I was drawn more close to God and I came to understand that I was to give all my struggles to God because he knows the reason and he has a purpose for everyone…You just work hard, you pray, yeah, and leave the rest to God…So that is what has been my motto, you just work hard, you pray, yeah, and leave the rest to God and focus on having the right companion on your side.

P3 also expressed that she remains in touch with her friend and the family who she stayed with as a homeless student until she graduated. “I was so grateful to this family because they accommodated me for that time …Even till now we are close.”

P4

P4 also reported being shaped by her experience. She also described insights she now applies and will continue to do so.

> Actually, if it never happened to me, I don’t think I would be the person I want to be, because it’s made me feel like, yes, you might be undergoing problems, but that isn’t … that should not hinder you from achieving your goal … challenges at times are good for us to see that good things just don’t come, you have to work for them. Yeah. So that is what that experience really taught me.

She expressed how the government can support homeless students based past situations and interactions as homeless student.

> You see everyone is entitled and has a right to education … they should come up a program that is for the homeless … homeless students and also it should be like a free program … the government should also help in coping with depression and also come up with a strong program for the homeless.

She expressed the social interactions in the past such as the friend she described helped her financially.

> This friend of mine actually until today we still remember how she was there for me in a big way, yeah, I am actually so grateful for her … and also the support from different people who encouraged me to do great.

P5

P5 has his own shelter now. He reported that he shares stories with others in similar situations now about how he overcame the challenges and succeeded and that how telling others of your situation is crucial. His high school graduation as a senior student remains as his greatest accomplishment. “I can consider that as one of the greatest in my greatest achievement in my life ... yeah after graduating.… I had a few months then that was the time I found my own shelter.”

He also expressed that if he did not speak about his stories of being a homeless student in the past, his life could have been different in the present time.

> If I could not share my stories people, how could I … how could I have been… been … ended … ended up being a beggar. Maybe I could have just ended up being a robber. Maybe I could have ended being dead somewhere.

He continued to share with other his stories and try to support them. “And now I share stories with people outside there, children, even people older than me…People need

to overcome, just look for positivity and open your mind. Think forward, nothing else." He described his social interactions of his uncle in the past and added "my uncle had a big impact in my life to change it from where I was now."

Summary

Chapter 4 included an overview of the data collection and analysis process, evidence of trustworthiness, and results. The research question was:

> RQ: How do former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school tell the stories of the experiences that promoted their high school graduation?

The results revealed that the participants told their stories of being homeless students with similar experiences and but also described particularities in their stories that promoted their high school graduation as former homeless senior students. The participants had different types of support that promoted their high school graduation. The types of support they describe included either family, friends, school personnel, an orphanage organization, and a homeless shelter. Even though they endured challenges throughout their senior year, they described how they overcame them despite the adversity and the role the support they received promoted their graduated high school as homeless students. Chapter 5 includes the findings and interpretations, and their relation to the framework in this study and the literature.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative narrative inquiry study was to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate despite adversity. I sought to understand participants' experiences through storytelling. While reviewing peer-reviewed literature for this study, I discovered more research was needed to understand how some homeless students develop academic resilience that promotes their academic success to graduate high school despite adversity. Only one researcher explored the individual resilience that promoted homeless students to graduate high school (Hart, 2017). More research was needed to understand all resiliency levels (individual, relational, external) that may have promoted homeless students' academic resilience to succeed and graduate high school despite adversity, rather than focusing on individual factors only (Gupton, 2018; Hart, 2017). The findings can help policymakers and school stakeholders enhance interventions to foster resilience and provide the necessary resources to ensure the academic success of homeless students (Hart, 2017; Rahman et al., 2015; Masten et al., 2015).

I used a qualitative narrative inquiry approach to gain a deeper understanding of the broader sociopolitical and personal factors that helped shape the experiences that promoted the high school graduation of former homeless students. I conducted semistructured interviews with five participants to answer the following research question:

RQ: How do former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school tell the stories of their experiences that promoted their graduation?

By combining thematic and narrative analysis, the findings revealed similarities of events, the chronological order in which they occurred, and particularities that enhanced my understanding of the unique experiences of each participant and how those experiences promoted graduation despite adversity.

Summary of Findings

The results yielded three key findings: (a) a homeless student's situation (b) a support system through speaking up (c) the importance of education. The findings revealed the challenges they faced from the moment they became homeless were similar to challenges often discussed in the literature on why homeless students fail. Yet, the participants in the current study overcame them. One main reason was that they reported their homeless identity, which led to a support system. The support system consisted of different types of support such as family, friends, school personnel, homeless shelter, and an orphanage organization. The types of support exhibited all levels of resiliency theory—individual, relational, and external—that can contribute to resilience (Garmezy, 1974; Gupton, 2018). The MVA law was not properly implemented across the participants' schools. The MVA law supports homeless students providing rights and services for homeless students to remove barriers they face and ensure their academic success (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Using a resilience lens helped me understand that participants did not require all types of support (e.g., school support) to succeed if another support was present (e.g., friend). Their experiences of being homeless

in high school and graduating revealed it shaped them as individuals and their lives, breaking their homelessness cycle and leading currently to stable and successful lives.

In this chapter, I discuss the key findings, compare the findings to the literature review in Chapter 2, discuss the study's limitations, and provide recommendations. I also discuss the implications for positive social change, theoretical implications, and the recommendation for practice, and I end with a conclusion.

Interpretations of Findings

The results of this qualitative narrative inquiry research study helped me to understand how former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school continued until graduation. The results yielded three key findings (a) a homeless student's situation, (b) a support system through speaking up, and (c) the importance of education. These findings contributed to the limited research of how homeless students developed academic resilience that promoted their academic success and high school graduation (Clemens et al., 2018; Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015). In the following sections, I discuss how the findings confirm, disconfirm, or extend the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

Finding 1: A Homeless Student's Situation

The participants were eager to tell their stories about how they became homeless and describe that situation even though the main interview question did not lead them to a specific time or situation. Toolis and Hammack (2015) found homeless students are eager to have their voices heard. An essential part of narrative inquiry is preserving the voices of the participants. The issue of homeless students is a growing concern in America, and more research is needed to understand their experiences as told by them, especially high

school senior students (Akelaitis & Malinauskas, 2016; Havlik, 2017; NCHE, 2019; Rahman et al., 2017; Royster et al., 2015). Due to scarcity of research on homeless students who do graduate high school and their experiences (Hart, 2017), the knowledge in Finding 1 provides a deeper understanding of their experiences of how they became homeless and the challenges they faced. Gaining a deeper understanding of their experiences and the challenges they overcame can help school stakeholders in developing more effective interventions to ensure homeless students' academic success (Hart, 2017; Ingram et al., 2017).

Reasons

The reasons participants expressed in the current study confirmed what other studies have found, that students become homeless due to various reasons such as being in a dysfunctional family, getting pregnant, or escaping domestic violence or parental abuse (Ingram et al., 2017; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2019). One participant had gotten pregnant, and her family kicked her out. Domestic violence also led one of the participants to become homeless with her mother. Another participant reported parental abuse by her mother and stepfather, and they eventually kicked her out. One participant discussed having a dysfunctional family, which eventually abandoned him in an apartment alone, and he became homeless because they could no longer pay the fees. One participant had a reason not discussed in the literature: her mother's death and the incarceration of her father during her senior year. She could no longer pay the rent fees and thus became homeless. Hart (2017) reported that some participants in her study also faced a lack of knowing how to provide rent fees and thus became homeless.

Although the participants in the current study described different reasons for becoming homeless, parents were involved in the reasons they became homeless across the participants. Families are often involved in why students become homeless (Ingram et al., 207; NCHE, 2017). Even though the literature discussed why some students choose to leave their homes, thus becoming homeless students (Ingram et al., 2017), none of the participants in my study chose to become homeless but were forced.

Challenges

Even though the purpose of this study was to add to the existing literature with more understanding on the resilience and academic success of homeless students rather than academic risks and challenges homeless students face, it was essential to capture the challenges the participants went through to graduate high school (Akelaitis & Malinauskas, 2016; Havlik, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Royster et al., 2015). Understanding their challenges can assist policymakers and school stakeholders to improve interventions and programs to ensure their academic success (Cassidy, 2015; Masten et al., 2015; Nott & Vuchinich, 2016). By organizing their stories in chronological order, Finding 1 included the identified immediate challenges the participants described once they became homeless. The participants expressed emotional challenges such as feeling scared, lost, abandoned, and alone, and several fell into depression. One participant in this study even described having suicidal thoughts that day. These emotional challenges are consistent with previous findings in the literature (Hart, 2017; Ingram et al., 2017).

Homeless students also face physical challenges such as the lack of shelter and not knowing where to sleep once they become homeless (Hart, 2017; Rahman et al.,

2015), which was confirmed by the participants' stories. Some of the places the participants stayed after they became homeless appeared in the previous literature, such as a stranger's house, a motel, a park, or the streets (Hart, 2017; Ingram et al., 2017; Rahman et al., 2015). A part of the MVA definition of what makes a student considered a homeless student under the law is when students stay in places like parks, cars, trailers, shelters, and places not designed for human beings to sleep (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

Lack of shelter is often a significant contributor to homeless students dropping out (America's Promise Alliance, 2016; Ingram et al., 2017). Researchers have emphasized providing shelter for students once they become homeless because the lack of shelter significantly contributes to homeless students' academic underachievement (Rahman et al., 2015; Sulkowski & Michael, 2014). All five participants in the current study reported they did not return to school immediately after becoming homeless. Researchers in the literature reported that homeless students' emotional and physical challenges also jeopardize their academic success and impact them whether they are homeless for a week, month, or year (Hart, 2017; Ingram et al., 2017; NCHE, 2019). Finding 1 may expand on the literature by suggesting homeless students are impacted emotionally, physically, and academically as soon as the same day of becoming homeless. The challenges faced the first day of homelessness have led other homeless students to academic failure or dropping out. Masten et al. (2015) raised the question of what makes the difference with those who do succeed.

Finding 2. A Support System Through Speaking Up

Finding 2 may be the most crucial finding to answering the research question. Stories have a beginning, middle, and end (e.g., how the story begins, the plot, and completion; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Finding 2 may be considered as the plot. Narrative inquirers analyze actions in storytellers' experiences and how they impact their experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). All participants' plots began with one common action: speaking up about their homeless student situation, which led to a support system. The types of support across the participants varied and consisted of family, friends, school, a homeless shelter for one participant, and an organization for orphans in another.

Finding 2 extends the understanding of shelter as support for homeless students by revealing that participants did not return to school just because they found a place to stay. The kind of place and other people in it were the contributing factors to their academic success. To find shelter (e.g., homeless shelter or friend or family's home), participants asked for help from a family member or friend, whether it was the second day of being homeless or after 2 months. That resulted in finding a place to stay for the remainder of their senior year and enabled them to return to school. Researchers have emphasized the need to prioritize basic needs such as shelter for homeless students to ensure their academic success (Havlik et al., 2017). While shelter is necessary, as previously discussed in the literature (Rahman et al., 2015), Finding 2 extends that knowledge by adding the role of other people in that shelter who promoted the participants' academic success. Several researchers have reported relational support (friends, family, mentors) as essential factors to promote academic success in homeless students (Clemens et al., 2018; Hart, 2017; Masten, 2018).

The findings in this study confirm the role a family or friends had in encouraging the participants to go back to school and graduate high school. Kroger (2017) reported that the support and opportunities offered to adolescents within their social context could significantly influence adolescents' identity. Each participant had a friend they described as a significant role in their academic success and high school graduation. Friends significantly influence one another, especially in high school senior years (Jones et al., 2017). This finding confirms the role of friends in the context of homeless high school seniors as well.

The role of family or a parent has often been reported as a protective factor for homeless students in elementary or middle school years (Herbers et al., 2014; Masten et al., 2003; Rutter, 2013). This study expands that literature by adding the role of a parent in a senior year context. The only accompanied participant had her mother who contributed to her academic success. Other family members expressed by the participants were grandparents, aunts, and an uncle. They supported the participants with encouragement, care, and some added financial support. Several participants expressed they were motivated to succeed and felt they had no reason not to because of their support system. Previous researchers have concluded relationships to be a factor that can promote academic resilience in younger homeless students (Clemens et al., 2018; Herbers et al., 2014). These findings in the current study confirm relationships to promote academic success with high school seniors. The findings also revealed that organizations and homeless shelters could contribute to homeless seniors graduating high school but continued to reveal that it was more than one type of support necessary to continue their senior year.

Reporting Their Homeless Identity to the School

All participants informed their homeless student identity to their schools. Speaking out that they were homeless to their school was an unexpected finding because the literature is vast about the lack of homeless students identifying themselves to schools. The lack of identity is often reported as the main challenge and barrier to ensuring homeless students' academic success since they do not know of their rights and services according to the MVA law without reporting they are homeless (America's Promise Alliance, 2016; Clemens et al., 2018; Hart, 2017; Ingram et al., 2017; Pavlakis et al., 2017). According to other researchers (Havlik et al., 2018; Sulkowski, 2016; Uretsky & Stone, 2016). Homeless students do not disclose their homeless identity, especially within high school settings, often due to stigma This was disconfirmed in my study.

All participants in the current study informed at least one school personnel of their homeless student identity, even though some expressed stigma. Some of the reasons they identified themselves might have been the support from friends and family that pushed them to return to school and graduate. Other reasons that led to revealing their identity how they perceived education and individual traits. Several participants expressed that education had always been important to them, even after they became homeless. These participants were determined to succeed. Hart (2017) also found that determination promoted the academic resilience of the former high school students in her study to succeed, although her participants did not disclose their identity. Some participants also expressed that they accepted their situation as homeless students and focused on looking forward to graduating high to get out of their homelessness situation and pursue their goals. Participants' goals consisted of having their own home, attending

college, having a stable life, and providing financial support for themselves and some family members. Whether they succeed or not, most homeless students know education is a vital factor to accomplishing their goals needed to obtain a high school diploma to pursue a career or attend college (Ingram et al., 2017).

After informing the school of their homeless student identity, most participants reported their teachers had the most significant impact on their academic success and high school graduation. Ausikaitis et al. (2015) similarly found that teachers had a significant impact on homeless students' academic success. Teachers can provide a safe environment for students, increasing the likelihood of reporting their homelessness identity and informing homeless students on their rights and services (Ausikaitis et al., 2015). They did not inform them of their rights and services; but the participants reported that their teachers understood their situation and were lenient on deadlines.

The teachers also encouraged some participants' academic success by providing any materials missed due to absences. Absences are one of the causes of homeless students dropping out or failing (Ingram et al., 2017). Finding 2 revealed that teachers could contribute to homeless seniors' academic success and extend the literature by showing the ways participants described their teachers supported them, such as understanding and leniency (see Results Theme 2). The National Center for Homeless Students Education (2014) found that homeless students who feel understood by their teachers are more likely to build positive relationships with their teachers and peers. While some participants had at least one teacher help them academically and emotionally, one participant received monetary vouchers only from her teachers and spoke negatively about her school experience. The knowledge of teachers' role on

homeless students in Finding 2 emphasizes the importance of teachers' role to ensure homeless students academically succeed and graduate high school.

Other school personnel part of some three participants' support system were school counselors. Those participants used the terms school/guidance counselor interchangeably. One school counselor informed one of the participants of their rights as homeless students, although they were not delivered, and another helped with college and career planning. Counselors must assist homeless students with their academic and emotional needs to ensure they succeed and college and career planning (Havlik, 2017). participants also reported the role of the school's mental health counselor. They expressed gratitude that they had someone who listened to them and helped regulate their emotional and mental challenges at that time. School counselors play an essential role in homeless students' academic success (Havlik, 2017). Cholewa et al. (2015) reported that students underprivileged students who meet with school counselors are more likely to succeed.

Other school personnel who helped participants in this study were the school resource officer, principal, and homeless liaison. Homeless liaisons are supposed to have a significant role in helping identified homeless students but had a minor role in participants' experiences (NCHE, 2017; U.S Department of Education, 2016). Overall, some school personnel helped the few participants differently, from providing them with basic needs (e.g., shoes and clothes) to waiving off fees to field trips. These basic needs can be why homeless students drop out of school when they are inaccessible (Rahman et al., 2015).

Lack of MVA Implementation

Researchers emphasized the need for homeless students to disclose their identity to their school so that they can receive the rights and services they are entitled to under the MVA, to ensure their academic success (America's Promise Alliance, 2016; Clemens et al., 2018; Ingram et al., 2017; Pavlakis et al., 2017). The findings in this study disconfirmed that if homeless students identify themselves as homeless, they receive MVA support. The lack of MVA implementation in Finding 2 was also surprising and unexpected because all participants in this study informed their schools that they were homeless. However, the schools lacked proper implementation of the MVA, and the levels of support the participants received from their school personnel were inconsistent. Previous researchers reported the main challenges to implementing the MVA properly and preventing students from dropping out or academic failure since students were homeless students' lack of identity (Ausikaitis et al., 2015; Pavlakis et al., 2017). The findings in the current study disconfirm that the lack of homeless student identity was the main challenge to improper MVA implementation. It is unclear why there was a lack of implementation or inconsistency of how the school personnel helped some participants; however, the MVA law requires equal rights and services to all homeless students in U.S. public schools to ensure their academic success (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

The findings also revealed some challenges the participants faced as homeless students could have been avoided through proper implementation. For example, one of the services available for homeless students is that the school assists them with finding shelter (Department of Education, 2016). None of the participants found shelter through the support of the MVA through their schools. Even though teachers were the most

supportive school personnel discussed by participants who received their support, one of the participants reported that her teachers only supported her with vouchers to buy food. This participant spoke negatively about her school experience with teachers, and other students bullied her for being homeless. She expressed relief that her school experience is over towards the end of the interview. Brown (2017) found that homeless students who reported feeling misunderstood or devalued by their teachers created a negative perspective on education and the purpose of receiving an education and caused a disconnection from the schools.

One way the MVA ensures the academic success of homeless students is to remove barriers that may risk their academic success (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). For example, ensuring homeless students have transportation to the same school before becoming homeless, even if they change districts (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). The lack of transportation is one of the barriers to homeless students' academic success. Ausikaitis et al. (2015) stated the former homeless students in his study wanted to graduate high school but faced challenges such as lack of transportation. Those services were not provided for the participants in this study, yet they overcame this challenge. One participant reported it took hours to get to and from school, and the school provided her with bus tokens only. Due to the inconvenience, she only went once a week to school to get the learning materials for that week. Others reported they walked to school or rode with others. Schools are also required under the MVA law to provide tutoring for homeless students to ensure their academic success and graduation (Uretsky & Stone, 2016). None of the participants received tutoring services except one participant, who had a tutor visit her only once. One of the follow-up questions asked to

the participants was if the school or school personnel informed them about their rights and services under the MVA law. Like previous findings in the literature, the students were not aware of them (Ausikaitis et al., 2015). Only one participant reported that her guidance counselor briefly informed her of her rights, but that same participant experienced the transportation issues and the tutor coming out once.

Finding 3: Importance of Education

Finding 3 confirms the importance of homeless students receiving an education and graduating high school to be successful later in life. All the participants in this study broke their student homeless cycles and are either currently in college or have finished college and have stable careers. Some have started a family. Finding 3 confirms the literature that demonstrated that with a high school education, homeless students are more likely to succeed and break their homelessness cycle by having a stable career or going to college (Dukes, 2018; Ingram et al., 2017). The first step is to help homeless students break their homeless cycle is to prevent them from dropping out and graduate high school (Ingram et al., 2017).

The participants also expressed how their experience shaped them into who they are now. They expressed how they pursue majors such as social workers to help other students or provide mentoring for other homeless students. Some participants expressed their perspectives on how schools and the government can help current homeless children based on their experiences. It is unfortunate that some of the suggestions made by participants, such as schools should provide free programs for homeless students to help them succeed, is really what the MVA law is. Other participants shared advice and strategies for other homeless students to overcome the challenges and graduate high

school, such as having a support system, look forward, think positive, and have faith because those qualities along with others' support assisted them in receiving their high school education. Finding 3 confirms previous researchers who expressed the need to listen to the narrative of homeless students and understand the strategies they used to succeed because they are an essential part of creating positive social change (Hart, 2017; Toolis & Hammack, 2015).

All participants continue to remain in touch with the individuals (e.g., friends, teachers) who helped them during their time as homeless high school seniors. They do not talk to the teachers who did not help them and continue to have distant relationships with the parents/s who was part of the reason they once became homeless. Towards the end of the interview, all participants expressed how grateful they are to others who helped them during their senior year as homeless students. They expressed the challenges they faced could have easily led them to dropping out or not even returning to school once they became homeless. Each participant referred to the types of support they received and credited them to contributing to their high school graduation and having stable lives now. Understanding and believing in homeless students' abilities help them make positive life changes, such as graduating high school and have a successful life (Barczyk et al., 2014).

Resiliency Theory

Using a resilience lens, the findings in this study were consistent with the resiliency theory because the foundation of the theory is that three levels can contribute to resiliency (Individuals, external, relational; see Shean, 2015). Researchers apply resiliency theory based on the discipline, which was academic resilience in this study

(Cassidy, 2016; Jowkar et al., 2014). Academic resilience is the ability of some students to succeed when presented with an adverse event that places their academic achievement at risk academically (Martin, 2013; Masten et al., 2015). Homeless students who graduated high school are considered academically resilient (Hart, 2017). Researchers who apply resiliency theory interpret findings in-depth and understand what resiliency levels (individual, relational, external) promoted homeless students to succeed despite adversity (Gupton, 2018; Hart, 2017).

Finding 1 embodied resiliency theory by revealing the challenges the participants overcame are challenges discussed in the literature on why many homeless students drop out of high school or academically fail (Ingram et al., 2017; NCHE, 2019). According to resiliency theory, risk must be present to be considered resilient (see Shean, 2015) and these participants took risks by leaving home and trying to make it on their own. Another concept of resiliency theory is that resilience is a process and an outcome (Masten, 2018). That means that individuals considered resilient remain functioning throughout the process (e.g., going to school) of adverse situations before the outcome (Garmezy, 1991a). Findings 1 and 2 revealed that participants began to face challenges immediately after becoming homeless students and throughout the senior year. They faced the challenges throughout the year while ensuring they are academically succeeding in school before the outcome of graduating high school. Homeless students who graduate high school are considered academically resilient (Hart, 2017; Masten, 2018). Finding 2 embodied resiliency theory by identifying how participants overcame challenges with the types of support they described, based on all three levels (individual, relational, external) that can contribute to resilience according to resiliency theory (Gupton, 2018).

Individual Resilience

Garmezy (1991) stated that resilient individuals face challenges and get stressed, but they can maintain adaptive behavior throughout adverse situations. Individual resiliency entails characteristics individuals carry that affect how they control their emotions or behavior, adapt to new situations, and interact with others (Shean, 2015). The participants in the current study accepted the situation of being homeless. They decided to move forward by asking another individual for help as an effective strategy to get assistance with the problem. These individual traits are described as self-regulation and problem solving (Gupton, 2017; Herbers et al., 2014; Masten, 2018). The participants in this study also revealed they were determined to succeed, and a few reported that having faith assisted them. Hart (2017) also found determination and faith as individual resilience traits that promoted former high school students' graduation in her study. Overall, all participants wanted to graduate high school to get out of their situation have successful lives.

Relational Resilience

Relational resilience is the relationships individuals have with others and the level of support and warmth they receive (Shean, 2015). Participants in the current study emphasized the essential role of other people in their stories that promoted their academic success and graduated high school. Relational support in the current study, which participants expressed as most significant to their academic success, consisted of either family, friends, or teachers. Previous researchers found that relational resilience promoted young homeless students' academic success (Herbers et al., 2014). The findings in the current study confirm the importance of having relationships in a

homeless seniors' context. It is essential for homeless seniors because some participants had no family support and only friends as their first support line.

External Resilience

External resilience are places that can promote resilience in individuals, such as schools, shelter, and community (Masten, 2018; Shean, 2015). Places such as school had a significant role in promoting academic resilience in some participants and ensure their academic success. One participant also expressed that the homeless shelter she stayed in was one of the main reasons she academically succeeded and graduated high school as a homeless student. Another participant reported that an organization's support of paying her school fees was one reason she succeeded. Schools can promote resilience in homeless students by implementing the MVA (Clemens et al., 2018). The findings in the current study revealed that some school personnel, such as the teachers and counselors, can promote homeless students' academic resilience in high school senior settings even when there was a lack of MVA implementation.

Using resiliency theory as a lens in the current study revealed that participants received at least one type of support during their experiences that promoted their academic resilience to graduate high school despite adversity. The types of support they received (e.g., a friend or school personnel) were based on one of the levels that can contribute to resilience individual, relational, external, according to resiliency theory (Garmezy, 1991a; Shean, 2015). While all levels of resilience are essential, the findings revealed that not all levels were present in each situation where participants exhibited resilience. For example, when school support which is considered a part of external resilience (Gupton, 2018) was missing for some participants, another type of support such

friend or family member and considered a relational resilience was enough to promote and resilience that ensured their academic success.

This current study built on the existing literature of resilience in homeless students by understanding how some homeless students develop academic resilience that promotes their academic success and graduate high school (Hart, 2017). Hart (2017) explored individual resilience related to former homeless students' academic success and high school graduation. There was a need for more research on the academic resilience of homeless students who graduated high school and the application of resiliency theory to investigate all the levels that contribute to academic resilience (Gupton, 2018; Hart, 2017). Identifying the academic resilience that promoted homeless students to graduate high school can enhance interventions and services for them to succeed (Gupton, 2018; Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015). The findings extend the literature by revealing that all levels of resilience contributed to the high school graduation of former homeless high school seniors.

Limitations

There are often limitations when conducting research (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). One limitation may be listening to past occurrences from a present point of view. Participants may be uncomfortable about sharing their experiences. Another limitation may be that the sample consisted of four females and one male, even though the findings were similar across all participants. The challenges homeless students face and how they overcome them may differ according to their gender and having only one male opposed to four females may limit the validity of the findings.

Recommendations

The current study increased the understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate, despite adversity. The findings in the current study revealed that once participants spoke up about their homeless students' identity, it led to additional types of support that promoted their academic success and high school graduation. Although Hart (2017) focused on individual factors leading to academic resilience, a recommendation for future researchers is to explore the individual traits identified in Finding 2 to understand what led participants to speak up and ask for help, possibly using Attribution Theory. Such a study may provide a deeper understanding of why some students report their identity since homeless students not reporting their identity is often a primary barrier to receiving their rights and services to succeed academically (Hart, 2017; Rahman et al., 2015).

Another possibility for future research would be exploring differences between male and female homeless students even though there were no discrepancies in the findings. Exploring gender themes separately in homeless youths could be vital to address policies and services according to their gender (Mayock & Sheridan, 2012; Pleace & Bretherton, 2017).

Another recommendation is a quantitative study with larger sample size, where the results could be generalized. A quantitative study may also provide a statistical analysis that would measure the impact of each factor that contributed to the academic success and high school graduation of homeless students. Policymakers and school stakeholders may benefit from understanding the correlation between the type of support homeless students receive and their academic success to enhance interventions or

strengthen policies by prioritizing the support that mostly correlates with homeless students' academic success.

Another recommendation is to research how schools respond to homeless high school students after reporting their identity and the extent to which the school implemented the MVA. The lack of MVA implementation in Finding 2 extends on Clemens et al. (2018), who suggested the need for professional development of the MVA for all U.S public schools after investigating how one school was implementing the MVA. Only one participant reported an extensive program for homeless students in her school. It is unknown whether her school was following the MVA guidelines. Yet, that same participant shared how the government should provide free programs for homeless students to support them emotionally and academically, which is one of the purposes of MVA (Department of Education, 2016). Researchers honing the actual delivery of the MVA can conduct studies with participants who identified themselves as homeless students to their schools as a criterion and investigate how the schools responded. Such a study is necessary since the findings of this study showed that the support received from the participants' schools varied, and there was a lack of MVA implementation.

Findings may assist policymakers and school stakeholders in better implementing the MVA and possibly delivering new insights rather than constantly blaming the lack of homeless students' identity. The MVA emphasizes the high school graduation for homeless students and provides all the services and rights to remove the barriers and ensure they succeed (Department of Education, 2016). The findings in the current study of five former homeless students who reported their identity yet did not receive their rights and services according to MVA needs further investigation. An increased

understanding of homeless students' experiences with schools after reporting their homeless student identity may assist policymakers and school stakeholders to better implement the MVA to ensure homeless students graduate high school.

Implications

It is essential to conduct studies relating to homeless high school seniors to ensure they graduate high school and prepare for the next step of their lives (Akelaitis & Malinauskas, 2016; Havlik, 2017; Royster et al., 2015). One way to ensure their academic success is by giving those who lived the experience and succeeded voices to share their stories and how they made meaning of the experiences that led to their success. Listening to the narratives of homeless students to understand how they overcame challenges and succeeded is essential to creating positive social change (Toolis & Hammack, 2015). Previous researchers have stated the need to understand the components linked to their academic resilience to succeed since it can academically help policymakers and school stakeholders (Hart, 2017; Masten et al., 2015; Rahman et al., 2015). The findings of this study may help the school stakeholders, policymakers, and practitioners mentioned in Chapter 2. literature review to ensure their success by enhancing interventions and providing them with their needs to ensure their academic success.

However, the unexpected finding of the MVA implementation may be more crucial if school stakeholders and policymakers want to ensure homeless students succeed and graduate high school. The findings can also help homeless shelters promote homeless students' success by providing comfort and a supportive environment.

Individuals such as family or friends of a homeless student may impact positive social changes by understanding how to help students become homeless.

Theoretical Implications

The study confirms the foundations of resiliency theory (Garmezy, 1974). Individuals are resilient when challenges are present that may disrupt a responsibility, going to school in this context, yet remain competent and have a successful outcome (Masten, 2018). The study results also showed that the types of support the participants received based on the levels (individual, relational, external) that can contribute to resilience (Garmezy, 1974; Shean, 2015). The findings can help practitioners and educators who expressed the need for further understanding of resilience in relation to homeless students to academically succeed, to develop more effective interventions and to fosters resilience in homeless students, to ensure their academic success (Cassidy, 2015; Gupton, 2018; Havlik et al., 2014; Masten et al., 2015; Nott & Vuchinich, 2016).

Implications for Practice

Through my qualitative narrative study, I gained a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate, despite adversity. Graduating high school gives homeless students a higher chance to break their homelessness cycle and have a successful life (Hart, 2017; Ingram et al., 2017), which was evident in this study.

In Finding 1, it was apparent that all the participants had some family dysfunction which led to them becoming homeless. In such scenarios, it may be helpful to promote school counselors in schools further. School counselors may help in all circumstances, whether the students become homeless or even as non-homeless, to have a space they can

trust to share their struggles. A few participants expressed the critical role their counselors had with their emotional struggles. Other participants, such as the participant who expressed having suicidal thoughts once she became homeless, could have benefitted from having that space to share her struggles.

School counselors can assist the students with their academic, social, and emotional needs but often must assist homeless students' basic needs such as food, water, and shelter even though it is not their responsibility (Havlik et al., 2014; Havlik et al., 2017). The findings in this study also revealed inconsistencies with the roles of school personnel across the participants. As school counselors in Havlik's (2017) study suggested, it is essential for schools to clarify each school personnel's responsibilities so they can fulfill their primary roles with homeless students and to ensure their academic success and prepare for college and their future career. Based on Findings 2, school personnel can benefit from how students described the help they received from their school personnel, especially teachers.

Understanding how the teachers supported the participants may increase the need for teachers to provide a safe and caring environment to all students because they were the first school personnel the participants reported their homeless identity to, and where most of the students spend their school hours. Teachers who support homeless students have better relations with their peers (Brown, 2017), which was evident in the current finding. Teachers can receive training to identify potential homeless students by recognizing signs students such as excessive absence and inform students about their rights under the MVA once they become aware of the services under the law themselves (Ausikaitis et al., 2015).

Schools can provide a safe and caring environment and reduce stigma with students who become homeless to increase the likelihood of speaking up since not identifying themselves with schools has been a significa2nt challenge. One reason homeless students do not disclose their homelessness identity is the stigma attached to being homeless, especially with high school homeless students (Havlik et al., 2018; Sulkowski, 2016; Uretsky & Stone, 2016). Some participants also discussed the need to remove the stigma.

Lastly and most importantly, the lack of MVA implementation in schools can benefit the Department of Education policymakers and have the potential impact of significant positive social change on a policy level. It is unfortunate to say that federal officials may benefit from the findings in this study. Stakeholders and policymakers can also use the information to see how some participants did not receive their rights and services according to MVA, even after identifying themselves as homeless. This finding is crucial since the lack of identity is often regarded as the primary homeless students not receiving MVA to ensure their academic success. While all the findings in the current study are essential to positive social change, policymakers and educators must know the urgency of the lack of MVA implementation. These findings showed that the proper implementation of MVA in all U.S public schools might be the most effective solution to ensuring the academic success of homeless students in U.S public schools, which is at an all-time high stake. Their stories revealed that most of their challenges could have been solved through MVA. Many of the resources that supported their academic success to graduate as homeless students are part of the rights and services included in MVA.

Because resilience is teachable, findings may help develop interventions to foster resilience and ensure homeless students' academic success. The results confirmed the findings of Clemens et al. (2018), who suggested an ecological perspective can promote a resilient environment which results in educational success for homeless students. Stakeholders may use the knowledge gained to develop interventions by including all three levels that promoted resilience for the participants in the current study (individuals, relational, and external). That way, if homeless students did not have access to one (e.g., friend or family), hopefully, an external (school or organization) or internal resilience (determination or looking forward) would be available to ensure their academic success. The findings in the current study revealed that participants did not require support on all levels to overcome the challenges and succeed.

Conclusion

In this qualitative narrative study, I gained a deeper understanding of the experiences that promoted former students who were homeless during their senior year of high school to graduate, despite adversity. Part of this success is rooted in having academic resilience, and more research was needed to understand the academic resilience of homeless students who graduate high school (Hart, 2017). The voices of five participants in this study provided insight into the broader sociopolitical and personal factors in their stories, revealing the importance of reporting their homeless identity, which led to a support system. The support system consisted of their attitudes and personal traits like individual determination to succeed, accepting the situation, and moving forward. These traits led to a significant action taken by all participants and asking for help which, extending the support of other people such as family or friends,

and support of a homeless shelter or an organization The participants also informed at least one school personnel about their homeless identity. Coming into this research, my knowledge from the literature was that significant challenge schools face is the lack of identity with homeless students, especially high school seniors. While a few teachers and counselors helped some participants, the MVA law was not properly implemented across all their stories.

Using resiliency theory (Garmezy, 1974), the findings extend on the literature by revealing academic resilience, whether promoted through individual level, relational level, or external level contributed to the participants graduating high school, despite adversity (e.g., Individual: *determination*; Relational: *friends;* External: *homeless shelter*). While lack of proper MVA implementation was unfortunate, it strengthened the findings and revealed all levels are essential when speaking of homeless students' contexts; because if one type of support was missing (e.g., school support), another type of support (e.g., friend) mitigated the risks of dropping out and promoting their academic resilience to graduate high school. Practitioners who expressed more understanding of the academic resilience of homeless students to enhance interventions that foster resilience can utilize these findings to ensure all levels are present to ensure homeless students' success and high school graduation.

Homeless students want to graduate high school in order to break their homelessness cycle and have a stable life and successful career. Part of this success is rooted in having academic resilience to graduate high school despite adversity. The senior year is the last year they must plan for college and career to ensure they have successful lives and a better future. Most participants in this study graduated from college

or in college, have stable careers, and a few started a family. The context of homeless students' situation should be an urgent priority in U.S public schools (Brown, 2017). The MVA law places emphasis on high school graduation for homeless students and provides rights and services to ensure homeless students' success (School House Connection, 2019). However, we are further risking homeless students' academic failure by not ensuring schools are equally and properly implementing the MVA.

Most challenges the participants faced could have been prevented. Luckily, the participants had other types of support that promoted their academic resilience to graduate. The federal law mandates the MVA implemented equally in each U.S public school and emphasizes that homeless students graduate high school. There should be no argument or trying to convince school stakeholders to address the situation of student homelessness and to implement the MVA. Instead of constantly reasoning the lack of identity as the issue to receiving their rights and services under MVA, policymakers should take a deeper look and ask could the lack of MVA implementation be another significant reason? The insights and experiences from the participant in the study provide a starting point for further research on types of support that promote resilience in homeless students to graduate and ensuring the proper MVA implementation, with the hope of increasing high school graduation for homeless students, to ensure they have successful lives and a better future.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Data were gathered from participants through the following interview question followed by probing questions:

Tell me the story of being a student from as far back as you can remember.