

The Impact of Homelessness on College Agency and Access for Homeless Youth

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Executive Summary

Approximately 500,000 youth experience homelessness for periods of time longer than one week; some 380,000 of them are under the age of 18, and only about 50,000 of them are served by a particular program that is designed to help homeless youth (NAEH, 2013). While these numbers are staggering, they don't help explain what it means to be a homeless teenager in America. Numbers alone can explain neither the challenges nor the triumphs of this particular group.

This qualitative study examines the college-going agency of homeless youth and includes a discussion of key issues and concepts that have significant influence on college access: homelessness and family involvement; social and cultural capital; and college knowledge and guidance. The study involved interviews of homeless youth, high school guidance counselors and youth service providers in Nashville, TN and Tucson, AZ. Youth participants represent traditional districts high schools as well as charter schools that are designed to accelerate credit recovery.

Significant hurdles found to obstruct college access for homeless youth include high mobility, lack of transportation to school, low family involvement, and inconsistent access to and understanding of college-related information (application process and financial aid). Mitigating factors include high levels of resilience and strong relationships with guidance counselors and service providers. Policy recommendations consist of a push for increased funding toward stable housing and transportation, increased collaboration between schools and service organizations, and targeted outreach for homeless youth on the part of higher education.

Introduction and Statement of the Problem

According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness, there are approximately a half million youth (up to age 24) who experience homelessness for more than a week each year. About 380,000 of them are under the age of 18 (NAEH, 2013). These young people lack the security of a safe living environment and, typically, a supportive and stable family system. These risk factors create barriers to positive daily school experiences and college entrance and persistence. Federal law expresses that “each state educational agency shall ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths” (McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001). However, despite this legislation, homeless youth remain exponentially at risk of decreased information about, access to, and persistence through college.

This study explores the impact of youth homelessness on college access, and examines questions regarding homeless youth and their experiences and perceptions of the college-going landscape that a strict quantitative analysis cannot provide. First-generation students (those whose parents are not college educated) may benefit from increased school-based or community resources such as extra coaching, special scholarships, application fee waivers, and other “boosts” to help offset the challenges associated with lack of higher education and/or poverty (College Board, 2015). There is little information, however, about how the additional experience of homelessness factors into the various resources that are already available to at-risk youth. More, there is a dearth of information that explains what it takes to successfully guide a young person

experiencing homelessness into college, or how some homeless youth manage to beat the odds while others do not.

This study focuses specifically on how factors associated with homelessness (poverty, instability, lack of family support, transience) may play into a degree of “social reproduction” that would decrease a young person’s chances of accessing college. Central areas of interest include perception, agency, self-efficacy, and other non-cognitive factors that typically facilitate the college-exploration process, as well as college persistence, for young people. This study seeks to answer the question: How does homelessness affect a young person’s agency for and perception of college access?

Review of the Literature

In order to begin an exploration into the relationship between youth homelessness and higher education agency, one must first examine the academic, social, and financial factors that influence student access to college. This review of the literature explores those factors through the lenses of social reproduction, familial involvement, and the relationship between socioeconomic status, capital, and access.

Social Reproduction and Inconsistency in K-12 Schools

Assuming that homeless and transient youth have the means to acquire a K-12 education, financial and social factors may greatly impact their success. It is commonly believed that schooling helps students overcome the realities of social inequity (MacLeod, 1995). Compulsory education on the primary level and near compulsory on the secondary-level, incorrectly leads to the assumption that the opportunities afforded students in the school system are equal (Gamoran, 2001). Social reproduction theorists believe that schools maintain societal divisions and strengthen inequality by funneling

lower class students into the workforce in subordinate roles (MacLeod 1995; Gamoran, 2001). Therefore, schools, according to these theorists, inadvertently prepare students to enter and exist in society in the same socioeconomic class as their parents (MacLeod, 1995). The school system, essentially, tends to reinforce the structure of a student's background regardless of whether that background is advantaged or disadvantaged.

Cultural capital, a concept developed by Bourdieu, is defined as “the general culture, background, knowledge, disposition, and skills that are passed from one generation to the next,” (MacLeod, 1995, p.13). In a review of Bourdieu's concepts of cultural capital and habitus, MacLeod (1995) suggested that the structure of schooling leads working-class students to believe that, unlike their upper class contemporaries, they will not achieve academic success. For homeless or transient students, the structure of social reproduction coupled with a lack of cultural capital may produce an added level of adversity, which they must overcome if they hope to gain access to a college education.

In addition to social reproduction theory and cultural capital, social capital is another important factor impacting student success and access. Social capital theory, predicated on group affiliation and the associated positive impact on an individual's capacity for greater connectivity and increased access to economic and human capital, can be generated through any kind of group affiliation, regardless of social class (Coleman, 1961). However, the particular “brand” of social capital that leads to greater knowledge and eventual access to college is generally shared among members of higher social classes. While private schools enjoy a wide range of social networks that tend to perpetuate the positive gains of social capital, less resourced urban schools, where homeless youth are more likely to attend, have greater challenges in this area. Schools

can mitigate this gap by intentionally focusing on the development of “fictive kin” groups that are defined by a focus on college (Tierney & Venegas, 2006), but the increased mobility associated with homelessness may pose a challenge for the more than 50% of homeless youth who change schools at least once in any given school year (ICP, 2009).

The structure of American education has not drastically changed over the past 100 years (Gamoran, 2001; Fine 1988) and is predicted to remain steady. The current educational system perpetuates stratification and disadvantages students from poor and working-class backgrounds. Groups that have historically underperformed may continue to do so if structures are not put into place to help them excel. Similarly, historically high-achieving groups can be expected to progress. Fine (1988) suggested that those students who are unaware of their value and worth are often the ones unable to receive a “critical education.” Homeless students, a population that may particularly struggle with value and worth, will be increasingly denied the critical education that allows them to advance in society. A further concern is that as college enrollment increases throughout the United States, it is predicted that the social reproduction practices observed on the K-12 level will become more prevalent in higher education (Gamoran, 2001). In this case, systems of inequality and oppression will perpetuate. Fine (1988) suggested that the confluence of merit with race, class, and gender contributes to disadvantaged students maintaining a lower status in society.

Familial Involvement

Homeless students may not benefit from familial involvement in their college decision-making processes in the same way their non-homeless peers do. Most students, especially in the early high school years, rely on family and peers for information about

the college application process and financial aid (NPEC, 2007). A study on the acquisition of college-related information suggested that families provide the most information, followed by the Internet and schools. In fact, ninth graders rely almost entirely on parents and other family members for college-related information (Bell, 2009). While educators have encouraged parental involvement both in the classroom and at home (Lareau, 1987), low-income (and therefore homeless) students typically have parents who did not receive a college education themselves and are, consequently, ill-equipped to share crucial knowledge and/or provide adequate guidance (Vargas, 2004). As students approach the upper high school years, the source of college-related information shifts to the school. Guidance counselors and teachers provide key information regarding deadlines and other application requirements (DeLaRosa, 2006). But as mentioned earlier, the increased mobility rates for homeless youth may present additional challenges for students who have not developed a connection with a high school guidance counselor due to lack of daily attendance or sustained enrollment at any given school.

Access to Higher Education

Lack of financial resources plays an important role in a student's ability to access college. Bowen et. al. (2007) found that while a variety of categories of students, including students of color, athletes, and legacies, enjoy distinct admissions decisions advantages, "there is absolutely no admission advantage associated with coming from a poor family and only a very small advantage (about 4 percentage points) associated with being a first-generation college goer" (p.175). In addition, Bowen et. al. (2007) outlined a

myriad of advantages, including increased diversity and social mobility, as to reasons why colleges should take such needs under consideration.

In addition to finances, social and cultural capital play a significant role in a student's ability to understand how to access information about college and financial aid. Perna's 2000 study affirmed the importance of cultural and social capital, regardless of race and class. The study found that "four-year college enrollment rates are comparable for Hispanics and Whites after controlling for differences in costs, benefits, ability, and social and cultural capital" (p. 135). Therefore, aspects of capital such as test scores, curricular program, and educational expectations impact Hispanic student enrollment. This is an important consideration, then, as we consider other marginalized populations such as homeless youth. De La Rosa (2006) emphasized the importance of frequent access to adults who have accurate information regarding how to pay for college, particularly in urban environments. Even when students with limited capital access to this information and receive aid, it does not necessarily mean they will enroll. Another Perna (2000) study affirmed earlier work by Mumper (1998) indicating that financial aid alone is not sufficient to increase college access (p. 137).

Neither socioeconomic status nor capital on their own can paint a full picture regarding access and choice. Perna (2006) called for an integrated model of multiple factors. The proposed model is one that "draws on an economic model of human capital investment as well as the sociological concepts of habitus, cultural and social capital, and organizational context" (p. 116). In a separate contribution to the *American Behavioral Scientist* (2006), she offered a similarly layered approach to increase information and capital by engaging multiple constituencies (parents, schools, local communities and the

students themselves) to begin to address these issues of access. While homelessness and, therefore poverty, do not serve as impenetrable barriers to college access, underserved students who do manage to gain access to college typically arrive underprepared. These students are more likely to need remedial courses and are much less likely to persist to graduation (Venezia, Kirst, Antonio, 2005).

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, students who earn less than a high school diploma are experiencing unemployment rates of 14%. Students who only complete high school and do not enter college don't fair much better and face a 9.4% unemployment rate (BLS, 2012). Given this dire outlook, it is imperative that the landscape for homeless youth is reformed. If homeless youth are to have any chance of successfully entering and persisting through a college education, they will need a significant increase in effort and attention throughout high school, during their transitional time as college freshmen, and throughout their entire college experience.

Methodology

Rationale

A qualitative study, rather than one based primarily in the analysis of numbers, was necessary to illuminate the experience of the homeless youth attempting to navigate the college access landscape. An eye toward the future, including post secondary education, characterizes the high school years, for many students in the United States. Research consistently offers that children from college-educated households are expected to continue their education into the college level (Horn and Nuñez, 2000). Students who do not come from such households experience additional hurdles as they attempt to gain access to college and some, for many reasons illuminated in this study, are able to beat

the odds. Through this qualitative study of youth homelessness and college access, the research team hoped to, as Rubin and Rubin (2012) encourage, “explain the unexpected” (p. 51). The study employed interviews, observations, and document analysis in order to arrive at a picture of homeless youth and college access that is more nuanced than what numbers can provide.

Design

This research project was intended to examine some of the contextual elements that create and perpetuate obstacles to college for homeless youth, as well as those that mitigate them. The research was conducted in Nashville, TN and Tucson, AZ. At the time of the study, both cities were of similar size and currently experiencing rapid economic growth. The cities were selected because of the research team’s familiarity with and interest in each. To develop a deeper understanding of the experiences of homeless youth who are considering post-secondary education and/or attempting to gain access to college, the project included a series of interviews with high school guidance counselors from each city, providers from agencies that serve homeless youth in each city, and homeless youth themselves. (See Appendix I for interview protocols.)

Guidance counselors. One high school guidance counselor, representing urban public high schools in each city, was interviewed at their school. The counselors each worked at schools that are classified as Title I, and serve high percentages of students from low-income families, although that was not a requirement for participation. Rather, the research team’s interest in speaking to guidance counselors was due to their ability to describe the college counseling processes offered at their schools, and a typical interaction with students and their families as it related to college-going practices.

Interviews conducted with the counselors, whom had each worked with homeless students, revealed noteworthy elements about the way schools disseminate college-related information, how guidance counselors reach out to students and families, and the general tone around college-going culture.

Youth-serving agencies. Providers at agencies that serve homeless youth were interviewed on site at their organizations. “Limitless Horizon,” a youth-serving organization in Nashville, helps at-risk youth overcome the many obstacles they may be facing in life. Among the many services the organization provides are an emergency shelter, street outreach programs, services for LGBTQI youth, a city bike program, and a college access center. Ultimately, Limitless Horizon attempts to help at-risk youth develop a sense of purpose and potential.

“Empower Youth,” a youth-serving organization in Tucson, is a dropout prevention program that serves to help homeless youth obtain their high school diplomas. Youth receiving services from Empower Youth are unaccompanied, meaning that no adult figure with a stable home has legal custody of them. Services include financial assistance, career placement, counseling, housing referrals, and medical and dental needs. Both Limitless Horizon and Empower Youth were selected for their direct service to their city’s at-risk youth. In addition, a school homeless coordinator for the Metro Nashville Public Schools was interviewed for a broad look into the problem of homelessness district wide, and for the purposes of this study will be listed as a service provider.

Through these interviews, the service providers from each organization offered important insights into some of the challenges homeless youth face, as well as the college-going aspirations of homeless youth and the college-going services and supports

available to help them. Additionally, the service providers helped the research team identify homeless youth to participate in the study. The pseudonyms Limitless Horizon and Empower Youth were selected to further protect the privacy of the service providers and any youth with whom they work. (See Appendix II for a guide of all pseudonyms used throughout this study).

Homeless youth. Homeless youth, who were identified by Limitless Horizon and Empower Youth, were interviewed at locations convenient to them. Seven youth, six of whom were from Tucson, participated in the study. The research team did not collect specific demographic information (race, gender identification, etc.) from the youth participants, but learned over the course of conversation that they ranged in age from 17-20. All but one participant was currently in high school; the twenty year old had already graduated. Although the researchers used the definition of homelessness as provided under the McKinney-Vento Act, they were careful to not impose their own definition or criteria for what it means for someone to be homeless on the youth participants. They allowed the youth to define homelessness as they personally understood and experienced it. As this study sought to explore the relationship between youth homelessness and higher education agency, this group was perhaps the most critical to interview. The researchers correctly believed conversations would reveal how the group received college knowledge, their experiences with the college application process, and other issues regarding college access and degree attainment.

More than any other interview participant, the interviewer/interviewee relationship with homeless youth may be the most precarious. The researchers understood that they were interviewing a significantly vulnerable population: youth that are

homeless. This required meticulous attention to the “conversational partnership” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) that needed to be established in a very short time. To assist with comfort in the interview process, each of the Tucson interviews was conducted in friendship pairs, so that no youth spoke to the interviewer alone. The Nashville youth was interviewed individually with the researcher. While overly officious adults may put off some youth, the level of recognition that is an inherent part of the qualitative interview may honor others. Thus, it was imperative that an appropriate style was developed while interviewing the youth and that each interviewer adjusted their style according to the perceived comfort level of each youth participant. To thank them for their participation, researchers provided each youth participant with a gift card to a local fast food restaurant.

All of the interviews were digitally recorded. In sum, the researchers interviewed seven youth that are currently homeless in Tucson, AZ and Nashville, TN; one high school guidance counselor from each city; and three service providers (two from Nashville, one from Tucson) who work for organizations that serve at-risk youth, including youth that are homeless. Due to time constraints, the research team was unable to transcribe each interview in its entirety. Data analysis began with a series of listenings to each interview. The first listening was for general familiarity, and subsequent listenings were to identify key themes and supporting quotes.

The inductive analysis included an examination of “indigenous concepts and practices” (Patton, 2002). Although each of the youth informants attended a different high school, many of the practices that take place in the American high school are universal (credit accumulation, emphasis on GPA, advanced placement classes, attendance policies, etc). It was critical for the research team to form a shared

understanding of these practices and how they impacted a young person's status in terms of college awareness and college eligibility.

Individual matrices were developed to organize information based on the theoretical underpinnings of the study. The theoretical frameworks of homelessness and schooling; academic preparation; social reproduction theory; and college knowledge, are listed as the main headings on the matrix (see Appendix III). These constructs serve as concept clusters which directly link back to the interview protocols that were used for each informant. Adjacent to each construct are the themes that emerged from the initial listenings of each interview, followed by more detailed evidence of key quotes, which were transcribed verbatim. Next, each individual matrix was combined into a larger matrix, where gathered data could be viewed in its entirety.

Throughout the analysis phase, the research team conferred via video conferencing for analysis. Each member of the team individually identified and proposed larger themes and key findings, which were discussed during team conferences. This anchoring process allowed the research team to confirm a shared set of meaning and inferences, which increased internal reliability.

Limitations. A few issues inhibited the levels of validity and reliability for this study.

Validity. Given the challenges associated with securing interviews with homeless youth, many of who do not have internet access or cell phones, the research team was not able to interview as many youth as originally intended within the available timeframe. Consequently, the external validity of this particular study was threatened in that the

researchers simply could not make any claims regarding the generalizability of the findings.

Another potential limitation of this study is that the primary means for identifying the youth were the service organizations, Empower Youth and Limitless Horizon. The research team, therefore, did not have access to youth who had not yet found resources to assist them during their period(s) of homelessness. This selection could have skewed any understanding of how homeless youth in general are supported through the college access process, and was considered throughout the interviews and during an analysis of the collected data.

Reliability. External reliability was compromised with one of the youth interviews, during which the youth's guidance counselor was present in the office. It is impossible to say whether or not the respondent would have answered the questions in the same way had the counselor not been present. This condition did not exist for any of the other youth participants. Additionally, one member of the research team serves as a high school guidance counselor and, during two of the interviews (rather than upon their conclusion), made comments or offered suggestions about the college-going process that may have skewed the youth responses in that they said what they thought the researcher wanted to hear. This may also have had an impact on the Tucson guidance counselor interview in that the participant may have provided different answers had the interviewer been strictly a researcher and not also a guidance counselor herself.

FINDINGS

Findings on Homelessness

"People are like 'where do you see yourself in five years' and I'm like I can't even tell you where I see myself next week." –youth participant.

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” All of the homeless youth interviewed are supported under the act, although homelessness looked different for each of them. Daniella, who had been homeless since being kicked out at age 15 shared that sometimes she lived with her parents, sometimes at the rescue mission, and sometimes at an organization that serves homeless youth. Bryan shared that he spends a lot of time couch hopping, and Violet said she moved out of her mother’s house at age 16 and has roommates. One of the guidance counselors explained that most of the homeless students in her school would be classified as such because they are transient or “doubled up” (living with an extended family member). Three main themes emerged from the data regarding homelessness: mobility, transportation, and future-orientation. Each of the youth, service providers, and guidance counselors referenced these themes as either challenges or opportunities for homeless youth in their K-12 schooling, and ultimately, their college access plans.

Mobility. Mobility was a common theme for homeless students. Many of the respondents had attended multiple schools since middle school, and explained that their academic performance, sense of belonging, or ability to seek resources suffered as a result. Violet commented, “I went to like 10 or 12 different middle schools and each school has a different way of doing things, so it was hard to keep up.” The inconsistencies from school to school presented a unique challenge to her academic

performance. While Violet's academics may have suffered, for some students, it was the difference between them and their peers that was a marked sign of their mobility issues. Pablo noted, "A bad day for me is like not having somewhere to sleep. A bad day for you is like your mother didn't get you the new cell phone you wanted." Another concern was that mobility would affect both their job prospects and relationships at school. Pablo shared that he always wanted to attend one high school for the entire four years, but knew that would never happen. He expressed his excitement at having attended a high school for almost two years because staff commented on the difference in his maturity during that time. Still, he believed that not having gone to that high school since his freshman year would challenge him as he applied to jobs because no one would be able to give a comprehensive perspective: "I feel like going there all four years would make me feel closer to my school, my community, and that would help me out with jobs in the future."

Transportation. For many homeless youth, transportation to and from school also served as a barrier to success. The inability to arrive at school on time, if at all, negatively affected students' records and jeopardized their status within the school district. Pablo's late arrival at school ultimately affected his credits: "At [school name], if you get three tardies, that's an absence. If you get six absences, you get no credit—I went to school for a whole year but I missed so many days that in that whole year, I got no credit—for my situation, it was difficult to get to school on time. They knew I was in [a homeless youth-serving program]—but there's nothing they can do. That's the rules."

Many schools do provide assistance to their students, but it does not necessarily make the transportation challenge any easier to navigate. Alexandra shared a similar story to Pablo's about transportation affecting attendance, but commented that she communicated often with her teachers, which helped. She also discussed other support from the school: "I got a bus pass from my guidance counselor, but I live in a new part of town now and I don't know it very well, so I don't take the bus yet." Coupled with frequent mobility, transportation issues might not be readily solvable by a bus pass, as students still have to familiarize themselves with their new communities and how to get around. One guidance counselor, Carnie, suggested that while transportation issues may pose a problem to homeless students, a larger issue for them may actually be navigating daily demands: "Homeless students are provided transportation but many choose not to access it. They have so many other things to battle. 'What am I going to wear?,' 'Are my things safe while I'm gone?,' 'Are my siblings getting to school?,' I think they have so many other things to battle that once they run into one stumbling block they might be done for that day and they'll try again tomorrow."

Future-Orientation. Each of the homeless youth participants shared varying perspectives on the future. For some, they had thought clearly about college or jobs after high school, while others were simply navigating day-to-day decisions. Alexandra knew that she always wanted to attend Stanford, and had attended numerous college fairs. She knew she should have taken advanced placement classes earlier in high school. At this

point in her high school career, she noted, “I’m just thinking financially.” Pablo, who had minimal college expectations, compared himself to the seemingly carefree students at the University of Arizona who appear “happy” and “enthusiastic”: “It looks like a fun thing to do, but at the same time I think they have a lot of money. They’re not too worried about things like I am.” Audrey, another guidance counselor, suggested that many homeless youth can’t be futuristic because they are intently focusing on the present: “They don’t have a lot of futuristic goals. Some of them, it’s like, where am I going to sleep tonight? Or, am I going to have a home next month?” Lauren, a service provider, believed that some homeless youth may lack the ability to be future-oriented due to confidence and trust issues: “So if I’m a homeless youth and most of our population that doesn’t think that high of themselves and has confidence problems, then ‘Why do I think I’m smart enough to make it at college? Why do I think I’m special enough to get that scholarship? My parents didn’t really care for me. My grandma and grandpa threw me out last week; they clearly didn’t care for me. Why is this random person who doesn’t even know my name going to want to help me out?’”

Findings on Social Reproduction

“I feel like I have connections, but they’re not the same as those other kids. Those other kids have parents and other family members who are always there for them and who are also wealthy. I don’t have that. I have connections, but not really.”-youth participant

The importance of social and cultural capital cannot be overstated in a discussion about college access and homelessness. The homeless youth and the adults (counselors

and providers) who play a supportive role in their lives each alluded to a lack of family involvement for these students, and, the importance that other strong adult relationships could have or did play in their lives. Both of these can play a role in either reproducing or interrupting the levels of social and cultural capital that homeless youth possess.

Conversely, these students also possessed extraordinary levels of resilience that speaks to their attempts to resist against their lack of social capital.

Family involvement. For many homeless students, the type of social capital that helps their more privileged peers navigate the college-going landscape is scarce. None of the seven youth participants had a parent or sibling who had attended college and three of them had parents who had never completed high school. Violet reported, “I’ve always been really serious about school, but my mom told me that I didn’t need to go to college. She doesn’t really get it. No one in my family has gone to college except one aunt.” In addition to the lack of home-based college knowledge that exists for the participants in this study, there was also an absence of expectations regarding educational attainment. Charlie said, “No one talks to me about going to college. Most of my family thought I would be a father by the time I was 15 because my mom got pregnant when she was 16.”

General academic support such as homework help or tutoring was also difficult to access for many of the youth. Brian shared, “I need extra help sometimes, but where I live, no one is very educated, so there’s no one there who can help me.” Another participant, Josh, talked about what he understood to be an important benefit of having

educated parents and, therefore, more money: “I feel like I have connections, but they’re not the same as those other kids. Their connections are always there and willing to support. Those other kids have parents who are always there for them. I have connections, but not really.” Additionally, when homeless youth relocate to homes of friends or other family members, the access to social capital does not appear to change. Caitlin, a Tucson Service provider, said, “A lot of time when we see our students who are couch surfing, they are couch surfing into a home that is also not very well off.”

Importance of relationships. Despite the lack of support from their parents, some of the participants had sought out other adults or peers to help provide or “fill in” a degree of social capital in ways that their parents were unable. Violet offered a warm description of her roommates: “...the family I don’t really have. They are all at Tucson Community College and they help me think about financial aid and calm me down when I’m freaking out. They make me feel like I can really do it.” Bryan, who attended weekly college counseling sessions at Empowering Youth said “I definitely would not be able to go to college if it weren’t for [these people]--they are the ones who are helping me think about this.”

Unfortunately, the high mobility that many homeless youth face makes it difficult to establish solid supportive relationships in the school environment. Pablo, who had changed high schools four times, said “Every freshman starts off goofy. Then, senior year, people see how you change and mature. Even after one year, the security guards

would tell me how much better I was. I feel like going there all four years would have made me feel closer to my school, my community, and that would have helped me out with references for the future.”

Resilience and reframing. The most striking theme in regards to college access and homelessness is that of resilience in these youth. Many of the youth understood the advantages that those with homes and more stable family situations had, but many thought that their independence and ability to overcome was an asset for success. Service providers and counselors echoed this language, often spending much of their time coaching homeless youth about how to frame their experiences to admissions counselors, using language such as “overcoming adversity.”

Many of the providers addressed the savvy that many of the homeless students possess that other students may not. Students often found ways to fill the void created by the absence of social capital. This theme of resilience was best exemplified by two students’ strategies at college fairs. Alexandra said, “I would follow some people around that were there with their parents. Their parents had really good questions to ask. It’s really stressful in that room. There are so many colleges and you don’t know where to start. So I just listened to the questions they were asking and used those.” Jose echoed that he followed around the “smart kids” and “did what they did.” He added, “They have more money, so they have more connections.”

Findings on College Knowledge

“No one is taking these kids to college goal Sunday” -Tucson guidance counselor

Participants were asked questions to gauge their interest and knowledge of college, and what has influenced their thinking around higher education. While five of the seven youth participants planned on attending college, it was clear that for many of them it was not the first thing on their minds daily. “College is certainly not the primary topic of our phone calls,” said Caitlin, one of the service providers. The service providers and guidance counselors nearly unanimously identified that finding a place to sleep, meals, clean clothing, and transportation to school were among the primary needs of homeless youth—well before plans after graduation can be considered. For many, the need to work after school, or even before completing high school, trumped any plans for higher education. “Their risk of dropping out is much higher because some think the answer is to go to work and get money,” said Nashville guidance counselor Carnie. Services providers and guidance counselors rarely had success stories in regards to homeless youth and college attendance.

Information gaps. In line with previous research regarding social capital, participants identified that when college is discussed there are large gaps of knowledge of the process of going to and attending college. “I don’t really know what the application asks for. I think it takes like 1-2 hours and there’s an essay,” said José (there is in fact no essay requirement for the school José identified). One student, Bryan, wouldn’t take the

SAT because he thought the cost was upwards of \$600. Daniella thought community college was \$15,000, when in actuality in her state all students can attend community college for free. Two students, both who attended credit-retrieval charter schools, expressed disappointment in not being given more information about college as the focus in these schools was primarily high school completion. Several others echoed not receiving enough information from 9th grade forward regarding higher education. Guidance counselor Carnie, however, contested that this information gap for homeless youth is not any different from any other low-SES student, “They [homeless students] find themselves behind in their coursework [from transience, losing credits from moving]. But I don’t think their knowledge gap is that much different from their peers,” she said.

How to pay for college, and lack of information about the FAFSA was a primary concern of nearly every youth that planned on attending school. “FAFSA and financial aid are very intimidating to our families,” said guidance counselor Carnie. Violet, a Tucson youth added, “Every time I talk to a different person, they tell me something else about FAFSA--it pays for this, it doesn’t pay for this, I don’t know who is telling me the right information.” Most of the youth had never heard of FAFSA. Some youth expressed doubts that colleges’ admissions officers understood their situations fully. Pablo explained, “College reps came [to school] a couple of weeks ago. They don’t really get

how hard it is to get into college without any money. They don't really talk about how to do it with money. They don't get it."

The service providers and guidance counselors each spoke of homelessness affecting college choice. Many spoke of encouraging "realistic" choices, mostly two-year schools. Steve from Limitless Horizon explained, "Their circumstances change so much it's hard to think of a four-year college." They also spoke of transportation continuing to be an issue for homeless and transient youth when attending local two year schools. The service providers and guidance counselors often control their college fairs and information sessions to only those schools are known to meet the needs of low-income and first-generation schools. Homeless youth most often identified schools that are close in proximity to where they grew up as the institutions they aspired to attend.

Susceptibility to the for-profits. Nearly every service provider and guidance counselor spoke in negative terms regarding the for-profit institutions attempts to market to low-income and minority students. All were heavily resistant to encouraging or allowing students to attend these institutions. In addition, one guidance counselor identified that her families were susceptible to for-profit companies who promised to find scholarships or fill out the FAFSA for the family. "We, with few exceptions (cosmetology school, art and design schools), do not allow for-profits access to our students. It's not that they are dying to go to those schools but they sound like they are quick, easy, and they love you, and low-income and minority students are vulnerable to

that,” said guidance counselor Carnie. Daniella said her first choices were two for-profit institutions, because the names “sounded official” and “office-like.”

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to explore the effect of homelessness on agency for youth with regard to college access, and, how homelessness affects a young person’s perception about college access. The findings suggest that although resilient, homeless youth may not be able to overcome all of the barriers presented by homelessness to immediately consider or enroll in college after high school. Although many of the youth interviewed for this study have college-going aspirations, they all detailed academic or personal hardships that may prevent their immediate enrollment in college. Additionally, many of the youth in this study lack the social and cultural capital that make their peers more prepared. Support from service agencies, guidance counselors, and other homeless youth have helped the participants in this study to survive, but in many cases, they are not academically or personally thriving.

Issues of mobility and transportation created complex answers to the study’s research questions. Mobility appeared to be the primary problem for all of the youth interviewed. Many shared that they had attended numerous elementary, middle and high schools, which made it difficult for them to catch up in the classroom and/or establish relationships with teachers and other mentor figures. Social reproduction theorists suggest that while many believe school to be a great equalizer of social inequality that is often not the case (MacLeod, 1995). The academic challenges faced by the participants in this study because of mobility support that notion. Similarly, transportation negatively affected school attendance. Many of the youth participants shared their challenges in

getting to school on time, if at all, because of uncertain transportation means. One high school guidance counselor shared that Nashville Metro Public Schools had, within the last two years, begun providing a bus pass to all students with demonstrated need. Previously, students would have to go to the guidance counselor and explain their hardship before one might be issued. Tucson Public Schools does not yet provide bus passes to its students. Instituting the general practice of providing bus passes to students in need will help mitigate the mobility and transportation challenges homeless youth face; however it will not immediately alleviate it. As Alexandra shared, she now has a bus pass but doesn't know the area of town she is in very well and thus hasn't yet used the pass. Mobility and transportation are inextricably linked to the challenges faced by this population, but a third factor, youth, should not be overlooked. Evidenced by José who often got to school late because his grandfather drove him, students in Nashville Metro Schools who would previously have to go to the counselor to explain their hardship before getting a bus pass, and Alexandra's uncertainty about using her bus pass in a new area of town, homeless youth are often dependent on others, lack the agency to speak up for themselves, or are perhaps intimidated by their surroundings. Mobility and transportation affected school attendance and morale, and coupled with youth, presented a distinctive challenge to considerations of college access.

Service providers played a critical role in the lives of homeless youth. In addition to meeting the needs public schools could not, they also had great insight into what homeless youth needed from the school environment in order to succeed. The caseload for both guidance counselors and service providers is large, but specializing in career and college counseling allowed Lauren, the service provider from Empower Youth to home

in on the specific needs of her population. She suggested that many homeless youth might believe that unless they are a student a counselor thinks has promise (in general or because of academic performance), the guidance counselor is likely not going to invest time in them. Those students, she suggested, are often found in Advanced Placement courses. Because of the academic challenges presented by their mobility and transportation issues, homeless youth are often not enrolled in such courses. This phenomenon is a good example of the assertion by social reproduction theorists that schools maintain societal divisions by funneling lower class students into the workforce in subordinate roles (MacLeod 1995; Gamoran, 2001). Steve, a service provider from Limitless Horizon suggested that schools don't allow students to show up as an authentic version of themselves. The care they need to be their authentic selves is often provided by service agencies such as Empower Youth and Limitless Horizon. While it would be reckless and unfair to suggest that all homeless youth are struggling academically or need extra attention from adults, the work of the service provider is important in helping them develop agency with regard to college access. As Steve noted, "We've learned that getting them to school immediately is probably not the best thing. Let's talk about stability first, then talk about school." The service provider is in a unique position to combat any feelings of self-doubt that a guidance counselor may lack the time or interest to handle.

As many social capital scholars have suggested, applying to college, and the requisite knowledge, habits, and dispositions that are associated with such a choice, is not uncommon among youth who come from college-educated households. In fact, many middle class youth find themselves with an inherited level of social capital that makes

college access almost a forgone conclusion (MacLeod, 1995). The homeless youth interviewed for this study possessed no such inheritance and, as a result, need to find ways of acquiring it if they are to have any chance of attending college.

Acquired social capital, as opposed to capital that is inherited, was made possible for the participants through the relationships they were able to forge with guidance counselors, service providers, and/or roommates. The Tucson high school guidance counselor has created a home for the at-risk students she serves. In her warmly lit office with comfortable couches, students are able to find not only granola bars and toiletries that she keeps on hand for them, but a group of “fictive kin” (Tierney & Venegas, 2006) that convene regularly to share their experiences of struggling to keep their grades up, completing college applications, and searching for financial aid. The lack of family members that would otherwise support these youth is mitigated by the “pastoral care” (Murphy, 2014) that is provided for them by their guidance counselor. This type of care goes beyond the typical guidance counselor-student relationship which is generally limited to course scheduling and writing college letters of recommendation, and includes food, safety, and advocacy, things that are typically provided for youth by their parents at home.

Another critical element that serves as a form of social capital for the youth participants is that of resilience. Despite the significantly challenging hurdles that each of the youth interviewees had faced in his/her life, they all possessed a degree of confidence and tenacity that they believed was a direct result of their homelessness. Each of the youth interviewed talked about overcoming challenges or adversity, and feeling a sense of pride at having done so. As cultural capital theorist Annette Lareau points out “it might

be useful to recognize that all social groups have cultural capital and that some forms of this capital are valued more highly by dominant institutions at particular historical moments” (Lareau, 1987, p. 83). Given the low levels of persistence among traditionally underserved college-going students, a study on the influence that high resilience can have on a homeless student’s ability to complete college could be illuminating. As one of the youth participants said “In college, you gotta balance so many things and in our lives we already balance so much. I feel like college would be a breeze.”

It is clear from this study that homeless youth face monumental challenges in accessing knowledge that could aid them in the process of applying and attending college. This finding affirms the research of De La Rosa (2006), which emphasizes the importance of frequent access to adults who have accurate information regarding how to pay for college, particularly in urban environments. The youth interviewed in this study, even those with the passion and desire to attend school, knew little about the actual cost or process involved with college. The FAFSA was another form of tremendous confusion, with many youth not even knowing its purpose. These findings unearth the need to simplify processes and disseminate information more widely for these students. Homeless students may require even more one-on-one attention and mentorship to close this information gap,

This study also furthers Perna’s (2006) assertion that a layered approach to information and capital by multiple constituencies is necessary to increase access. While each of the guidance counselors and service providers could name only a few success stories for homeless students who have matriculated to higher education, each identified heavy interaction between themselves and the student. When it comes to low-income,

homeless, and transient youth, even what may seem like the “common sense” of college going may not be common. To help these students be successful, processes must be made easier, obstacles removed, and information disseminated widely. For the so-called average student, posters on the wall and yearly check-in meetings may be enough to create what many of the service providers and counselors called “a college going culture.” However, it is clear that homeless youth, and all low-income youth, really need individual attention that middle class students have in the form of an overly involved parent or family member. Educators must ask themselves what it would take to provide all students this individualized attention that assists them in charting their course to their educational hopes and dreams.

Higher education policies and practices play an important role in the potential success of these students, as well. College materials and financial information must be accessible to all youth, even without the interpretation skills of an adult mentor. The service providers in this study discussed inviting to their college fairs and information sessions, schools that were particularly good at recruiting, accepting, and retaining first generation, low-income and heavily transient students. This was done to give students the individual time, with admissions counselors, they required to get all of their lingering questions answered. All colleges and universities must do the work necessary to be included in such a group of schools that excel at helping these students matriculate and succeed.

The findings surrounding the for-profit industries highlight the the desire many low-income and homeless students are in to gain access to the benefits and privileges of higher education, without the knowledge of how to do so. With many for-profit colleges

producing single-digit graduation rates, guidance counselors need to be extra protective of vulnerable populations about the for-profit institutions and steer them to colleges with excellent retention practices with low post-graduation debt.

Recognizing the need to continue support post-matriculation (as cited by Venezia, Kirst, and Antonio, 2005), Limitless Horizon has set up a staffed resource center at the local community college. Steve, the college connection counselor at Limitless Horizon described the center as one with food, comfortable furniture, staff and tutors --all things he believed students needed to be successful in and outside of the classroom. He commented, "We prepare them for life outside of classroom. At the community college, if life is going to get into the way it's going to happen here." This support allows students the opportunity to primarily focus on their academics and worry less about other life challenges. Bridges to Belmont, a program housed at Belmont University in Nashville, accepts small cohorts of students from low-income high schools and gives them heavy co-curricular supports to ensure their retention and success throughout their college experience. Students nationwide could benefit from resources such as those provided by Limitless Horizon and Bridges to Belmont, as well as K-16 relationships that are widely scaled. Colleges must support students through not only the academic challenges that students may face inside the classroom, but additional challenges that could hinder them outside of the classroom.

CONCLUSION

Directions for Future Research

Homeless students are an often-overlooked population in the education landscape that needs to be studied further. Further research is needed to delineate the unique

challenges of homeless youth that are not also associated with all low-income students. In addition, students who do not have access to service providers and school guidance counselors should be studied and compared to those that do, to see if and how service organizations and school counselors are fulfilling their missions. Finally, college students who overcame homelessness to attend and persist through college should be studied to determine what factors are associated with their success.

Policy Implications

This study has potential for several implications for policy and practice. Regarding policy, the McKinney-Vento Act only allows for resources for youth to get access to such necessary amenities as backpacks, toothbrushes, and transportation. District homelessness coordinators, who work with these youth, only serve as a connecting resource to assist with students and families securing stable housing. This may be in conflict with a recent and large-scale U.S. Office of Housing and Urban Development study [HUD] (2015) indicating that subsidized housing vouchers are more effective in curbing homelessness, stabilizing families, reducing school mobility and improving family well-being. One must examine whether McKinney-Vento funds are allocated for maximum effectiveness. Any way to secure housing for youth so they can focus on the important task of education is vital.

To address the problems of transience and transportation to schools of origin in K-12, Nashville began a program in 2013 that allows all students to ride metro buses for free. Prior to this, transient youth received transportation support if they came forward looking for services. Still, not all of Nashville is accessible via bus. Tucson has no such

program, and should implement one. This program should be extended to students attending community colleges as well.

Partnerships must be extended between K-16 and service organizations, with the Limitless Horizon program that assists both K-12 counselors and provides a resource center at a local community college as a model. Students in these dire situations require support getting to and through higher education. In response to many of the service provider and guidance counselor assertions that homeless youth are reluctant to come forward for assistance, K-12 educators must be more vigilant about assessing a student's housing situation and getting them to connected to resources. In recognition of the finding that those students who did succeed had a present and vigilant adult presence, we must ask ourselves about the guidance structure and caseloads in K-12 education, particularly in low SES schools, and determine if it is enough to provide this kind of successful model of intrusive advising.

Higher education institutions and government have an obligation to clarify and disseminate knowledge of what it will take to apply to their institutions in language that is much more accessible to the average high school student. This would help all youth, but particularly homeless youth, get the information they need without turning to the predatory scholarship companies and for-profit institutions. These for-profit operations must be regulated and held accountable for their targeting of low-income students without ensuring their success.

Finally, colleges and universities must also assess whether students have stable housing situations during the admissions process. This would help determine if adequate resources are present to ensure that a stable environment to complete work actually

exists. While community colleges are often considered commuter schools, those who can, should consider providing subsidized on campus housing that will keep students on campus to address the needs of any student who lacks a stable housing situation but desire to advance their careers and lives.

These youth are among the most vulnerable populations in society, and deserve at the very least that policies and practices are examined to ensure that the promise of education to all is not an empty one.

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Appendix I: Interview Protocols**STUDENTS****ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS**

- What do you like to do for fun?
- What's been the best part of your week so far?

HOMELESSNESS

- Where do you currently live and how long have you been there?
- Do you consider your housing situation stable?
- What do you like most about your living situation?
- Do you experience any challenges in your current living situation?
- How do those challenges affect your experiences in school (Attendance? Participation? Homework? Tardiness?)? How about another story about that?
- Ask for as many stories as time allows*
- Do you ever miss school? If so, why?
- How does being homeless affect your interest in doing well in school?
- Do you have internet access and a computer where you live?
- Do you have computer or internet access anywhere else?
- What do you typically use the internet for?
- Do you ever use the internet to look up information about college?

ACADEMIC PREPARATION (*rigor, tracking, teacher expectations, counselor expectations and exposure, peers, time spent on homework*)

- Tell me all the school(s) you went to starting in middle school (this is getting at mobility)?
- (If they rattle off a large number of schools) Which was your favorite? Why?
- How important are grades to you? Why?
- How long do you spend doing homework every night?
- Where do you generally do your homework?
- Do you ever get extra tutoring/help?
- Who do you get tutoring/help from?
- How do you decide which classes to take each year? Does anyone help you make these decisions?
- What do you want to do after high school?
- With whom do you [most] discuss your post-high school plans?

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION THEORY (*level of parent engagement, expectations, siblings, educational values, educational attainment, signals, how class culture influences educational experiences/attainment, concept of success*)

- Do you live with anyone?
- Who did you live with when you were younger?
- Do your (family members) talk to you about going to college?

-be responsive based on who student says they live(d) with. this might require asking this question multiple times.

- Do you remember when they started to talk to you about college?
- How far in school did your (family members) go? (e.g. high school, college)
- When you were younger, did you ever talk about going to college with your (family/the people you live with)?
- What did (the people that raised you) tell you about college?
- Do (the people you live with) want you to go to college?
- Has anyone in your family gone to college?
- Has anyone in your family graduated from college?
- Do your friends ever talk about college?
- Are your friends planning on going to college?
- What do your friends say about college?
- What about other people at school who aren't your friends? Maybe students you've worked on group projects with? Do they ever talk about going to college?
- What do you think other kids in school think about college?
- Do you ever have group assignments? How do you like group work? (**OAKES**)

COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE *(costs and access)*

- Are you planning on applying to college?
- (if yes) which colleges are you applying to and who helped you make this list?
- (if no) why aren't you applying to college?
- (if they are applying) Where do you get the most information about college?
- Do your teachers talk about college? If so what do they say?
- Have you ever met with a guidance counselor at school? What did you talk about?
- What do you think you have to do to get into college?
- Is there a part of the college application process that seems scary?
- (if yes) Why is it scary?
- (if no) Why isn't it scary?
- Once you get into college, what are the steps to getting to go?
- How much does college cost?
- How will you pay for college?
- Do you know the difference between a four-year college and community college?
- How much do you think community college costs?
- How do you plan on paying for college?
- Have you heard of Tennessee promise (FOR NASHVILLE YOUTH ONLY)?
- Have you heard of the FAFSA? What do you understand about it?
- Have you been on a college campus before?
 - (if yes) what did you think about being there?
- What do you think a typical day in college would look like?
- Have you ever been to a college fair or a presentation by a college?
 - (if yes) what do you think?
- What is your dream job?
 - What do you think you need to do to get there?

COLLEGE PERSISTENCE (*academic integration and social integration → for students*)

- Is there anything that makes you think that you can't or should not go to college?
- What do you think the hardest part about going to college would be?
- Can you describe anything you've observed that makes other students think they can't or shouldn't go to college?

GUIDANCE COUNSELORS**ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS**

- How is your week going so far?
- Find something in their office and ask about it.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION

- How do you help students decide which classes to take every year?
- Does this school offer extra help or tutoring for students?
- To what extent does this school help students understand high school performance and involvement as a bridge to college attendance?
- What non-college options does this school talk to students about or help prepare them for?
- Have you ever spoken with a homeless student specifically about the college application process? What did that conversation(s) entail?

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION THEORY

- Describe the student demographic of your school.
- Do students often meet with you and express interest in attending college?
- On average, how many students do you think you meet with to specifically discuss college-going choices/options?
- On average, how many students from your school go to college annually?
- Do you meet with parents and families about their students' college-going plans?
- Do parents and families request those meetings? Are they required by the school? How else might those meetings occur?
- What observations have you made about the families that meet with you?
- What expectations do the parents and families have of you?
- What expectations do the parents and families you meet with have of college?
- Are there differences in the expectations of parents and families?
- What do you think might cause or contribute to their different expectations?
- What expectations do the students you meet with about their college-going choices have of college?
- Are there differences in the expectations among students?
- What do you think might cause or contribute to those different expectations?
- Do you ever have meetings with the parents and families of known homeless students?
- How do those meetings differ from the meetings with parents and families of non-homeless students?

COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE

- How do you see the fit between the nature of college materials and students in your high school?
- How do you see the fit between the nature of college materials and the realities of homeless students?
- How do you see the fit between the nature of college information presented to students (via admissions reps) and students in your high school?
- How do you see the fit between the nature of college information presented to students (via admissions reps) and the realities of homeless students?

HOMELESSNESS

- Do you currently have any known homeless students who utilize your services?
- How common is to have homeless students in this school?
- What services or resources are they provided that might be different than what is provided to non-homeless students?
- How do the challenges faced by homeless students affect their experiences in school (Attendance? Participation? Homework? Tardiness?)?
- Do you think being homeless affects their interest in doing well in school? How?
- Do you think being homeless affects their interest in post high-school options? How?
- What are the biggest gaps in information between what the homeless students you work with currently know and what they need to know in order to attend college?

YOUTH SERVICE PROVIDERS

ICEBREAKER QUESTIONS

- How is your week going so far?
- Find something in their office and ask about it.

ACADEMIC PREPARATION

- Describe your role and its various functions.
- What academic assistance does your organization give to students at risk and/or homeless students?
- Does this organization offer tutoring for students?
- To what extent does this organization help students understand high school performance and involvement as a bridge to college attendance?
- What non-college options does your organization talk to students about or help prepare them for?
- Have you ever spoken with a homeless student specifically about the college application process? What did that conversation(s) entail?

SOCIAL REPRODUCTION THEORY

- Describe the student demographic of those that use your services.
- Do students often meet with you and express interest in attending college?
- On average, how many students do you think you meet with to specifically discuss college-going choices/options?
- On average, how many students from your organization go to college annually?

- Do you meet with parents and families about their students' college-going plans?
- Do parents and families request those meetings? How else might those meetings occur?
- What observations have you made about the families that meet with you?
- What expectations do the parents and families have of you?
- What expectations do the parents and families you meet with have of college?
- Are there differences in the expectations of parents and families?
- What do you think might cause or contribute to their different expectations?
- What expectations do the students you meet with about their college-going choices have of college?
- Are there differences in the expectations among students?
- What do you think might cause or contribute to those different expectations?
- Do you ever have meetings with the parents and families of known homeless students?
- How do those meetings differ from the meetings with parents and families of non-homeless students?

COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE

- How do you see the fit between the nature of college materials and students in your program?
- How do you see the fit between the nature of college materials and the realities of homeless students?
- How do you see the fit between the nature of college information presented to students (via admissions reps) and students in your organization?
- How do you see the fit between the nature of college information presented to students (via admissions reps) and the realities of homeless students?

HOMELESSNESS

- Do you currently have any known homeless students who utilize your services?
- How common is to have homeless students utilizing your services?
- What services or resources are they provided that might be different than what is provided to non-homeless students?
- How do the challenges faced by homeless students affect their experiences in school (Attendance? Participation? Homework? Tardiness?)?
- Do you think being homeless affects their interest in doing well in school? How?
- Do you think being homeless affects their interest in post high-school options? How?
- What are the biggest gaps in information between what the homeless students you work with currently know and what they need to know in order to attend college?

Appendix II: Pseudonym Guide

Name	Role	City
Audrey	Guidance Counselor	Tucson
Carnie	Guidance Counselor	Nashville
Lauren	Service Provider Empower Youth Program	Tucson
Caitlyn	Service Provider Metro Nashville Public Schools	Nashville
Steve	Service Provider Limitless Horizon College Program	Nashville
Alexandra	Youth	Tucson
Bryan	Youth	Tucson
Charlie	Youth	Tucson
Jose	Youth	Tucson
Pablo	Youth	Tucson
Violet	Youth	Tucson
Daniella	Youth	Nashville

Appendix III: Sample Matrix

Pseudonym: Pablo (Youth)

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK				EVIDENCE
CONSTRUCT	THEME	THEME	THEME	KEY QUOTES
HOMELESSNESS & SCHOOLING -Parent involvement -Charter vs. district -School policies	MOBILITY Difficulty in planning for/conceptualizing of future.	Lack of resources	Lack of understanding or flexibility of school authorities	<p>“People are like ‘where do you see yourself in five years’ and I’m like I can’t even tell you where I see myself next week.”</p> <p>“A bad day for me is like not having somewhere to sleep. a bad day for you is like your mother didn’t get you the new cell phone you wanted”</p> <p>“At Catalina, if you get 3 tardies, that’s an absence. If you get 6 absences, you get no credit—I went to school for a whole year but I missed so many days that in that whole year, I got no credit—for my situation, it was difficult to get to school on time. They knew I was in YOTO—but there’s nothing they can do. That’s the rules”</p>
ACADEMIC PREPARATION -Rigor -Counselor & teacher expectations -Homework habits -Tracking	Charter designed for credit recovery	School focus on high school graduation vs. college--school emphasizes getting kids to graduate; not really about college		<p>“There have been a couple of staff at my school who have talked to me about college and I say I can’t afford it and they say stuff like FAFSA and stuff like that—but like FAFSA I can’t even apply for that until I know I’m going to graduate.”</p> <p>“They just look at my credits and figure out what I need to graduate.”</p>
SOCIAL REPRODUCTION THEORY -Cultural capital -Social capital -Social class -Expectations	Resiliency/ Grit	No family experience with higher ed	HABITUS: Importance of strong relationships/ connections	<p>“I don’t really talk to anyone about school. When I do get to talk to my family, it’s more about how are you doing—if I’m eating, stuff like that.”</p> <p>“People in our situation think a lot differently than other people. Some people have both their parents and you know they get a job because their parents helped them get a job; they get a car because their parents helped them get a car, and you know everything is a little easier for them because they are getting help from their parents. but like for us, we’re homeless, we raised ourselves, I taught myself how to do things, and so I think differently than a lot of other people.”</p> <p>“I always wanted to go to one high school for the whole time, but that could never happen—some jobs ask for references. Every freshman is goofy when they start school. They start off crazy, and then senior year people see how you change and mature. Just being in the same school for two years in a row—the security guards and the staff would talk to me about how I’ve changed from last year and how I’m bettering myself and I would listen to them. I feel like going there all four years would make me feel closer to my school, my community, and that would help me out with jobs in the future.”</p>
COLLEGE KNOWLEDGE -Finances -Process -Counselor accessibility	Lack of financial awareness	-No college counselors at credit retrieval charter schools	Perceptions of types of kids who go to college	<p>“They don’t have college counselors at my school. At my old school we had them, but I couldn’t stay there because of absences.”</p> <p>“I’ve been on LBCC campus. When I’m on the UofA campus, everyone is happy, they’re enthusiastic, they’re going from class to class and it’s pretty awesome. it looks like a fun thing to do. But at the same time, I think they have a lot of money. They’re not too worried about things like I am.”</p>