8-2017

A Qualitative, Exploratory Case Study of Self-Reported Influences Affecting the Decision of Homeless Sexual-Minority Students to Leave Home

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SELF-REPORTED INFLUENCES AFFECTING THE DECISION OF

HOMELESS SEXUAL-MINORITY STUDENTS TO LEAVE HOME

by

M. Patterson Hill, B.S., M.S.

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

Stephen F. Austin State University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Doctor of Education

STEPHEN F. AUSTIN STATE UNIVERSITY

(August 2017)

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to identify commonalities regarding influences within the decision-making process that attributed to sexual-minority students voluntarily or involuntarily becoming homeless in lieu of remaining in their respective familial home. An exploratory case-study research design was utilized to determine common themes present in the self-described events that led up to the respective decisions of three volunteer participants, who identified themselves as sexual-minority youths at the time of transition, to leave home. Results of this study discerned five commonalities among the participants' experiences, which influenced their experiencing homelessness. The detection of these commonalities may provide school administrators and other professionals, both within and outside of the public school system, with guidance on the creation of interventions designed to mitigate the impact of these factors, decreasing the potentiality of this demographic becoming homeless and thus being subjected to the detrimental ramifications inherent within such a circumstance.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize those of impact, which without their assistance this endeavor would not have been possible. These individuals altruistically assisted me for reasons I cannot explain, but for which I am eternally grateful. Micki Grimland, Michael Travis, Jaden Prendergast, Valerie Frain, Dustin Stone and of course, my three participants, who so bravely entrusted me to share their stories; thank you. Your interest in my research, willingness to help, and continual guidance as I traversed this study cannot be repaid. I only hope you are as proud of the finished product as I.

Thank you to the doctoral faculty of Stephen F. Austin State University for expanding my world. The vision with which you have graced me is both a privilege and a responsibility. It is my sincere desire to make you proud.

Gratitude is also most certainly owed to the members of my dissertation committee. Dr. Karen Embry Jenlink, Dr. Freddie L. Avant, and Dr. Chance Mays. Your patience, professionalism and insight elevated this research to a level beyond my reach without you.

To the Chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Patrick M. Jenlink, your insight and guidance cannot be overstated. Best expressed in the terms of an eastern philosophy

of which I am intrigued, and that encompasses tenets to which I aspire; you have been my Bodhisattva.

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge those who have been impactful outside of my educational aspirations and accomplishments. These individuals, by their presence in my life, have direct responsibility, and perhaps culpability, for the person I have become and for what I hope to accomplish.

Christopher W. McCord, your friendship and unwavering support over the last thirty-plus years provided a foundation and security for me that cannot be overvalued. I have always known you were there for me if needed and I consider myself extremely fortunate to have your friendship. Cheers to you!

Terry M. Cannon, you continue to be a driving force in everything good I do. Your significance within this world would have been expansive and, unable to make up for that, I will do the best I can to make an impact for us both.

Virgie Mae Rucks, I do not have a means by which to thank you for the love and support you provided me during your lifetime, but please know that you are not forgotten. As with the others introduced within the front matter of this research, this would not have been possible without you.

I conclusion, I would like to acknowledge the Barrow, Blanchard-McCord, Cannon, Hull, and Varnell families. Each of you has had, and continues to have, a lasting impact on my life. I will forever be in your debt for the advantages you have provided me. I most certainly have not been worthy of the love, encouragement and stability you have graciously provided, however nonetheless you gave it. Thank you!

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research, the accomplishments of the past, and the aspirations of the future to two individuals who I can state unequivocally are my inspiration, and to which I owe everything.

To my father, Dr. Grady E. Hill: words cannot express your impact every moment of every day. I miss you and so want to make you proud.

To my wife, Dr. Daya D Hill: your love, friendship, support and tolerance are the foundation for all that I do. I would not have been able to envision the goal of a doctorate had you not shown it to me. I would have abandoned the undertaking of the program if not for your continued support and reiteration that "it was much harder back when you did it!" Lastly, I most certainly would not have continued down the path of this research, which at times seemed untraversable, without your insistence that it needed to be done and that I was capable of doing it.

In the first paragraph of this dedication I had originally written *my* instead of *the* regarding accomplishments and aspirations. It was at the very moment that I typed those words, and immediately retracted them that I realized all that I am, all that I do, and all that I may impact, is a direct reflection of you too. There is no me or my. There is simply a culmination of us all. Thank you.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction to the Study

The very foundation of emotional and physical well-being can and has been stated to lie within the confines of stability and security. As declared by Abraham Maslow, without those needs met, the opportunity to toil on higher-level ambitions such as self-improvement or actualization is arduous if not impossible (Maslow, 1943). Unfortunately, for some students, these boundaries are present. Due to this potentiality, student homelessness and the factors resulting in it should be of paramount importance to educators. As we examine homelessness and its' pervasiveness, we must clarify that "two distinct groups make up the population of homeless children in the United States: (1) families with children and (2) unaccompanied youths" (State Report Card, as cited in Corliss, Goodenow, Nichols & Austin, 2011, p. 1684). It is the group described as *unaccompanied* that this qualitative, exploratory case study will explore, as it has been reported to be a significant population. Corliss expresses " . . . 575,000 to 1.6 million youths are estimated to be living without a home *and* [emphasis added] without a family, unaccompanied on the streets or in a shelter" (State Report Card, as cited in Corliss, et al., 2011, p. 1684). Bidwell (2014) presents a slightly more optimistic number when she reports "75,940 [out of 1.25 million homeless youths] are unaccompanied, meaning they

are living on their own" (p. 1). At either level these reported numbers at face value are abominable, but even more alarming is the potentiality that they are understated. Link et al. (1994) report:

> The magnitude of the problem of homelessness is probably much greater than [even] current prevalence studies indicate . . . because those studies over represent chronic, long-term homeless people, they distort our image of who becomes homeless and mistakenly overemphasize the importance of personal deficits as causes of homelessness. (p. 1912)

A shift from a deficit-based rationalization, to one which acknowledges conscious decisions to become homeless based on existing interpersonal dynamics needs to occur to accurately identify and perhaps one day remediate the deleterious resulting outcomes.

Theoretical Foundation

The identification and analysis of influences affecting the decision of homeless sexual-minority students decision to leave home will be accomplished in this study by utilizing components of ecological systems theory as it relates to the potential influence environmental factors may have had in the decision that homeless sexual-minority students made to leave home. An:

> Ecological framework facilitates organizing information about people and their environment in order to understand their interconnectedness. Individuals move through a series of life transitions, all of which necessitate environmental support and coping skills. Social problems involving health care, family relations, inadequate income, mental health difficulties, conflicts with law enforcement

agencies, unemployment, educational difficulties, and so on can all be subsumed

under the ecological model, which would enable practitioners to assess factors

that are relevant to such problems. (Hepworth, Rooney, Rooney, Strom-

Gottfried, & Larsen, 2010, p. 16)

Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) have convincingly argued that school psychology needed to

move from a medical model, in which the source of student difficulties was inherent

within the child, and adopt an ecological approach that interpreted student difficulties as a

breakdown between the individual student and the contexts in which they function. The

same shift could prove valuable in social research.

Utilization of the ecological systems theory to explore phenomena such as

homelessness seems inherently incontrovertible. In fact, "originally proposed by

Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979), ecological systems theory (EST) has been widely adopted

by developmental psychologists interested in understanding individuals in context" (Neal

& Neal, 2013, p. 722). This is substantiated by the veritable utilization of ecological

systems theory since its unveiling. *Google Scholar* reveals that *The Ecology of Human

Development* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which first outlined EST, has been cited nearly

15,000 times as of September 2012. Conceptually, EST has been used to motivate a

focus on setting-level influences, guiding the development of contextual models to

explain a range of phenomena including urban adolescent psychological and academic

outcomes (e.g., Seidman, 1991).

This type of theoretical framework is crucial to understand complex interrelations

at play, which could result in the decision of sexual-minority youth to leave home.

Bronfenbrenner (1986) stated that to understand the child, the environment in which the child lives must be fully examined including the home, school, community, culture, and so on.

Brofenbrenner's theory (1979) identifies four types of "concentric structures" (p. 22) that has an impact on individual development: (1) a microsystem, (2) a mesosystem, (3) an exosystem, and (4) a macrosystem. These "sub-systems" interlink to form an individual's ecological system.

A microsystem, as defined by Bronfenbrenner (1979) is ". . . a pattern of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given setting with particular physical and material characteristics . . . " (p. 22). This could be described as a primary or *immediate* environment. It is one in which the participant immediately resides, such as a child's interaction within his/her immediate family *or* classroom at school.

A mesosystem, as detailed by Bronfenbrenner (1979) ". . . comprises the *interrelations* [emphasis added] among two or more [immediate] settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as the . . . the relations among home, school and neighborhood peer group; for an adult, among family, work, and social life) . . ." (p. 25). Succinctly, a mesosystem is simply a "system of microsystems" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). This level of system is the last articulated by Bronfenbrenner in which the participant had *direct* involvement. The mesosystem framework describes the affects that different environments, within which an individual passes, have on the development of

that individual. A common example is how "events at home can affect the child's progress in school, and vice versa" (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 723).

The next level of ecological impact, according to Bronfenbrenner, is the exosystem. The ". . . exosystem refers to one or more settings that do not involve the developing person [participant], but in which events occur that affect or are affected by, what happens in the setting containing the developing person . . . " (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). Examples of these settings, ". . . in the case of a young child, might include the parent's place of work, the parents' network of friends, the activities of the local school board, and so on . . ." (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). This framework allows the integration of external and potentially unobservable influences to the participant, into the sphere of direct behavioral influence of the participant. Abridged, the exosystem framework described how:

> The psychological development of children in the family is affected not only by what happens in the other environments in which the children spend their time but also by what occurs in the other settings in which their parents live their lives. (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, p. 723)

Lastly, Bronfenbrenner , in his 1979 text *The Ecology of Human* Development, discusses the macrosystem. He defined the macrosystem as:

> Consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 26)

The existence and identification of these frameworks presents a relational foundation within which to evaluate influences on behavior, and specifically key to this study, decision-making.

These frameworks should not be considered in isolation however, as it has been elaborated, "Most readers are likely familiar with the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem frameworks, but Bronfenbrenner [also] stressed the 'person-context interrelatedness . . .'" (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2009, p. 199, as cited in Burns, Warmbold-Brann, & Zaslofsky, 2015, p. 250) of these systems, which is indicative of the ecological systems theory framework, and the canon to understanding as complex of a phenomena as the one being attempted to study. It is not just *internal* systems or relationships that impact a developmental phenomenon, but *external* ones as well. The impact of these influences and how they relate not just to the eventual phenomenon, but to each other, is recognized within the scope of ecological systems theory and is a critical scaffolding to understanding the complex influences in the decision making process of homeless sexual-minority students to leave home.

Statement of the Problem

It has been succinctly articulated by Tunaker (2015) that ". . . young people who identify as LGBT [sexual-minority] are often victims of hate crime, bullying, harassment, violence, oppression, discrimination, and social exclusion . . . [and] in many cases these factors can contribute to alienation from the family home and subsequently result in homelessness . . ." (pp. 241-242). Although the negative impact of residential instability for students has been advanced by recent research and corroborated by Hyde (2005)

when he elucidated ". . . a growing body of research conducted with homeless young people has demonstrated that this group is disproportionately vulnerable to a host of negative physical and mental health problems . . ." (p. 171), commonalities among influences precipitating the condition, specifically pertaining to youths of a sexual-minority orientation, is less conspicuous. Keuroghlian, Shtasel, and Bassuk, (2014) proclaim:

> Given the intense needs of LGBT youth who are homeless, it is imperative that we understand their unique experiences and develop responsive practices and policies. The range and severity of health risk vary across subgroups of all LGBT youth, and because the population is nonhomogeneous, their particular needs must be attended and addressed. (pp. 66-67)

The identification of commonalities or trends leading to this disruption should be of growing concern to school administrators as a shift in visibility of sexual-minority youths has paralleled what Sullivan (2005) described as a ". . . new tolerance and integration . . ." of the sexual-minority lifestyle within the "normative" dominant traditionalist society. Sullivan (2005) credited mainstream media embracement of openly gay characters and plot lines in combination with an increase in openly gay legislators, entertainers, and athletes to the *normalization* of sexual-minority ideology. He postulated that ". . . this new tolerance and integration – combined, of course, with the increased ability to connect with other gay people that the Internet provides – has undoubtedly encouraged more and more gay people to come out . . ." (Sullivan, 2005, p. 7) resulting in a ". . . threefold increase in the number of same-sex unmarried partners from 1990 to

2000 . . ." (Sullivan, 2005, p. 7). Although he concedes that there "are no reliable statistics on openly gay teens, no one doubts there has been an explosion of visibility in the last decade" (Sullivan, 2005, p. 7).

As elaborated by Dunne, Prendergast, and Telford (2010) ". . . at a time when it may be easier than before for a person to come out at a younger age, the risk associated with constructing identities and lifestyles against the norm should not be underestimated . . ." (p. 103). Even when sexual-minority youth remain in the home, it is often not without fallout resulting from their transparency. The National Alliance to End Homelessness (2016) stressed that:

> National reports have consistently noted the prevalence of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) youth in the homeless population. Many experience abandonment and severe family conflict stemming from their sexual orientation and gender identity but other factors are also present: physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect, substance abuse by parents, and mental health disabilities. (LGBTQ Home-Page)

Unfortunately the potential results only exacerbate once they become homeless. The National Alliance to End Homelessness (2016) elaborated that:

> Once homeless, LGBTQ youth experience higher rates of physical and sexual assault and higher incidence of mental health problems and unsafe sexual behaviors than heterosexual youth. LGB homeless youth are twice as likely to attempt suicide (62 percent) as their heterosexual homeless peers (29 percent). (LGBTQ Homepage)

With the deleterious effects of homelessness on youth established, the overrepresentation of sexual-minority young adults within this population becoming increasingly discerned, and the statistically substantiated increase in the number of students disclosing their proclivity towards a sexual-minority oriented lifestyle: the magnitude of the experience of sexual-minority students becoming homeless and being subjected to adverse reverberations will increase. The ability to identify central tenets present in the decision-making process of the youths to leave home thus becomes central to the eventual development of intervention strategies for educational practitioners to attenuate the phenomenon.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the influences within the decision-making process that attributed to sexual-minority students decision to leave home. This study will attempt to contribute to the scarce research currently in existence as purported by Corliss et al. (2011) when they announced, ". . . although evidence from studies focusing on homeless populations suggest that sexual-minority youths face a greater risk of homelessness than do heterosexual youths, studies using representative samples that are able to quantify the magnitude of the relative risk are scarce . . . " (State Report Card, as cited in Corliss, et al., 2011, p. 1684) and Dunne et al. (2002) when they questioned "how far and in what ways does sexuality play a role in a housing crisis" (p. 1) and ". . . why have the experiences of young people who may be questioning their sexuality been neglected in service provision and in the mainstream literature of leaving home and homelessness?" (p. 1). Keuroghlian, Shtasel and Bassuk (2014) agreed, ". . . despite the

size of the population and the concomitant risk, little is known about the causes, correlates, and consequences of homelessness among youth who are LGBT . . ." (p. 66). This seems consistent with Toro, Dworski, and Fowler's (2007) assertion that although ". . . youth may be the single age group most at risk of becoming homeless . . . , most of the research conducted over the last two decades has focused on homeless adults . . ." (pp. 6-1).

Bassuk et al. (1997) articulated, ". . . previous studies on family homelessness have had limited assessments of risk and protective factors and have not conducted multivariate analysis. Findings across these studies have been inconsistent, particularly with regard to violent victimization and social supports . . ." (p. 241). The need for further research is corroborated by Buckner, (2008) when he purported

> . . . research to date has largely overlooked [person centered approaches to homelessness] . . . and more needs to be done to understand the extent to which there are subgroups of homeless children who vary in the extent to which they have significant problems across different dimensions of functioning . . . (p. 733)

The implications of this study lie in the necessity to assist in the development of effective strategies by educators and social-service providers to reduce the pervasiveness of the phenomenon. This is especially critical given that few homeless sexual-minority students seek out support from teachers, school/mental health counselors, or school administrators (Bidell, 2014), and ". . . knowledge about effective strategies for serving these youth is limited . . ." (Fernandes, 2007, p. 32).

Research Question

This research study examines the following question regarding the prevalence of homelessness among sexual-minority students:

1. What influences affected homeless, sexual-minority students' decision to leave home?

Significance of the Study

The significance of this study can be found in the abundance of repercussions and ". . . multitude of dangers that homeless young people are confronted with in their daily lives, including a lack of access to basic needs, such as food, clothing, and shelter, sexual exploitation, and violent victimization . . ." (; Robertson, 1989; Whitbeck & Simmons, 1990; Daddis, Braddock, Cuers, Elliot, & Kelly, 1993, as cited in Hyde, 2005, pp. 171-172). Abandoning the stability of home is likely a measure of pensive consideration and desperation. As elaborated by Hyde (2005),

. . . leaving home is a measure that young people take to protect themselves from further emotional and physical danger. This is a measure that exposes young people to a number of risks, including interpersonal violence, substance use and abuse, poor nutrition, and long-term poverty . . . (Hyde, 2005, p. 172)

Bassuk (2010) clarified:

Homelessness for a child is more than the loss of a home. It disrupts every aspect of life. At a time when children should be developing a sense of safety and security, trust in their caregivers, and freedom to explore the world, they are

severely challenged and limited by unpredictability, dislocation, and chaos. (p. 498)

This disruption can have sequential deleterious ramifications as elaborated by Cronley, Jeong, Davis, and Madden (2015) who clarified that ". . . there appears to be a relationship among homelessness, victimization, and future criminal behavior . . ." (p. 193), this included an increase in the likelihood of violent behavior.

Understanding the influences, which trigger this phenomenon, is critical to developing interventions to possibly circumvent the culmination of homelessness. This is especially true when combined with the reality, as described by Gattis (2009) that "The majority of existing shelters and other care systems are not providing safe and effective services to GLBT homeless youths . . ." (p. 1067). Gattis (2009) noted an increased awareness in the need to services for this demographic and he reported ". . . in 2002 there were 5 shelters for sexual-minority youths and, in 2007 there were 25 nationwide . . ." (Urbina, 2007, as cited in Gattis, 2009, p. 1067).

Although ". . . promising practices are beginning to emerge . . . evidence based interventions and strategies for working with LGBT subpopulations remains very limited . . ." (Keuroghlian et al., 2014, p. 66). "As increasing number of youths identify as GLB [sexual-minority] at earlier ages . . . more research on families of such youths will be helpful in developing programs to assist parents with GLB [sexual-minority] children . . ." (D'Augelli, Grossman, Starks, & Sinclair, 2010, p. 197). This study is significant because it addresses this shortcoming in the current research and resulting practice.

Assumptions

An assumption can be defined as ". . . the supposition that something is true . . . [or] . . . a fact or statement taken for granted . . ." (Webster, 1983, p. 110). The researcher assumed that the study participants answered the interview questions honestly regarding both the events leading up to the decision to leave home and the resulting living arrangements which classified them as homeless. This study also assumes that the participants will represent the population.

Limitations

There are limitations within this study derived from both the researcher and the research participants. Information provided by the research participants during the interviews was dependent upon recollection of events and therefore subject to lapses in memory, embellishment or trivialization. The participant accounts were recorded and transcribed for the study. The very nature of the process lends a potentiality of error with regards to transfer of information, emotion, and emphasis, which can be misinterpreted by the interviewer. Other limitations of this study include the possibility that the selected participants will not represent the population, therefore producing generalizability concerns, and potential affects from unrecognized selection bias regarding the subjects selected to be interviewed.

The research method selected for this study, a qualitative case study, could also be perceived to have inherent limitations when contrasted with quantitative research. The tenets of validity and reliability are recast from the traditional positivist view, to a more interpretivist approach by focusing less on the ability of the research finding's ability to

predict or forecast future phenomenon and more on accurately conveying to the reader the nuances of the specific phenomena studied as it related to the specific subject, time, and place.

Delimitations

Three distinct delimitations of the study exist. First; due to the purposeful sample procurement, it could be argued that external validity with regards to generalization may be compromised. It should be noted though, as Stake (1995) conferred, "we do not choose case study design to optimize production of generalizations" (p. 8).

Secondly, each of the participants, at the time of participation was no longer homeless. Although this feature is not necessarily relevant to the research question of this study, it could perhaps influence the current mindset of the participants during the interviews.

Lastly, due to the participant selection process, less diversity with regards to gender identification and sexual orientation exist among the participants than what the researcher had desired. This dimension could perhaps raise external validity concerns, but may also present opportunities for further exploration of the phenomenon from a differentiation between identifications/orientations perspective

Definitions

A set of conceptual definitions was developed to inform the reader and create a cohesiveness of understood meaning between the author, participants, and reader. The set of definitions, which align with the study and the research design, included the following terms.

Bisexual.

Bisexual is ". . . an identity term used to refer to individuals who have emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions to both men and women . . ." (Durso & Gates, 2012, p. 15).

Cisgender.

Cisgender describes ". . . an individual whose gender identity matches the sex assigned to them at birth . . ." (Hill & Mays, 2013).

Gay.

Gay is an identity term that ". . . can refer to both men and women who have attractions to members of the same sex . . ." (Durso & Gates, 2012, p. 15).

Gender Binary.

Gender binary refers to ". . . the idea that there are only two genders, masculine and feminine . . ." (Hill & Mays, 2013).

Gender Dysphoria.

Gender dysphoria is ". . . a diagnostic term to support folks feeling distress around one's gender or stress around the way their gender is perceived . . ." (Hill & Mays, 2013).

Gender Expression.

Gender expression is a term that ". . . refers to a way a person communicates gender identity to others through behavior, clothing, hairstyles, voice, or body characteristics . . ." (American Psychological Association, 2016).

Gender Identity.

Gender identity ". . . refers to a person's internal sense of being male, female, or something else . . ." (American Psychological Association, 2016).

Lesbian ". . . is an identity term used to refer to females who have emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions to members of the same sex . . ." (Durso & Gates, 2012, p. 15).

Homeless.

For the purpose of this study, *homeless* is defined as a hybrid of both the definition purposed by The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) which is ". . . individuals not more than 21 years of age . . . for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and who have no other safe alternative living arrangement . . ." (Fernandes, 2007, p. 4) and The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act which states youth are *homeless* if they ". . . lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence . . ." (Toro, Dworsky, & Fowler, 2007, p. 6-2) with the additional stipulation included by the researcher that the homeless child is not accompanied by a related adult. This stipulation is consistent with the Code of Federal Regulations definition of *homeless* as ". . . a person under 18 years of age who is in need of services and without a place of shelter where he or she receives supervision and care . . ." (Runaway and Homeless, 2014).

Lesbian.

Lesbian is " . . . an identity term used to refer to females who have emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions to members of the same sex . . ." (Durso & Gates, 2012, p. 15).

Runaway.

For the sake of this research, no distinction is made between the terminology *runaway*, defined as " . . . individuals under the age of 18 who absent themselves from their home or legal residence overnight without the permission of their families . . ." (Runaway and Homeless Youth, 2014) and *throwaway*, defined as ". . . youth who have been abandoned by their parents or have been told to leave their household . . ." (Fernandes, 2007, p. 4). The decision to disregard this distinction is grounded in the justification presented by Fernandes, (2007) when she stated any "distinction between the two groups are artificial and may be counterproductive" (p. 4) and that ". . . most youth on the streets are both *runaways* and *homeless* because they have no home to which they are willing or able to return . . ." (JAMA 1989 as cited in Fernandes, 2007) and ". . . many youth experience both circumstances . . . [with the distinction dependent] on whether information was gathered from the youth (who tend to emphasize the thrownnaway aspect of the episode) or their care takers (who tend to emphasize the runaway aspects)" (Fernandes, 2007, p. 5).

Sexual-minority.

Sexual-minority refers to a student who self-identifies as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered [LGBT](Burt 2007; Cochran et. al., 2002; Gattis, 2009).

Transgender.

Transgender is ". . . an umbrella term for persons whose gender identity, gender expression, or behavior does not conform to that typically associated with the sex to which they were assigned at birth . . ." (American Psychological Association, 2016).

Trans Man.

Trans Man refers to ". . . a person who was assigned female at birth but has a male gender identity . . ." (Hill & Mays, 2013).

Trans Woman.

Trans Woman refers to ". . . a person who was assigned male at birth but has a female gender identity . . ." (Hill & Mays, 2103).

Organization of the Study

This chapter provides the reader with an introduction to the background of the research problem, which is the disproportionate occurrence of homelessness for students who identify with a sexual-minority orientation. The purpose and significance of this study was discussed, as well as definition of terms relevant to the study. Chapter II provides a review of relevant literature that validates: (a) the magnitude of homelessness, (b) the deleterious effects of homelessness, and (3) the disproportionate representation of students who identify with a sexual-minority orientation. Chapter III explains the research design utilized in this study, exploratory case study, with regards to its strengths, weaknesses, and appropriateness for the study. Chapter IV is devoted to the participant interviews. It is structured to include a profile of each participant, including pivotal moments in their recollections of their childhood, as well as a description and discussion of common themes, which emerged from the interviews. Chapter V examines the common themes identified in Chapter IV though the theoretical lens of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory and lastly, Chapter VI provides a summary and conclusion regarding the research as well as research implications and recommendations. for both

future research and potential intervention strategies to be incorporated in the public

school system.

CHAPTER II

Review of Literature

Introduction

The literature reviewed for this study serves the purpose of describing: (a) the

prevalence of youth homelessness, (b) identifying the effects of homelessness for youth,

and (c) the potential relationship between youth homelessness and sexual orientation.

The reviewed literature, in the opinion of the researcher, substantiates the purpose of this

study and necessitates interventions to mitigate the following depicted existence and

evolution of the phenomenon.

Prevalence of Homelessness

Fernandes (2007) asserted, ". . . the precise number of homeless and runaway

youth is unknown due to their residential mobility . . ." (p. 5) as well as purposeful

attempts by the youth to remain "invisible" to authoritative entities (Fernandes, 2007, p.

5). Despite the realization that any estimation of this population is likely at best a

conservative guess, attempts to quantify the phenomenon are well documented as early as

the seventies. Ringwalt, Greene, Robertson, and McPheeters (1998) cited studies which

". . . found numbers of runaway youths that ranged from 519,000 to 635,000 in 1975 and

450,750 in 1988 . . .” (p. 1325) to numbers of both runaway and homeless youths ranging

“. . . between 733,000 and 1,300,000 in 1983 . . .” (p. 1325).

The seemingly vast discrepancies that can be observed in the estimates of actual

homeless youth in more contemporary studies can be traced back years as well. Ringwalt

et al. (1998) noted a study that “. . . estimated in 1987 between 52,000 and 170,000

unaccompanied youths aged 16 and younger were homeless . . .” (p. 1326). This broad

variance mirrors Fernandes (2007) assertion of “. . . estimates of the homeless youth

population rang[ing] from 52,000 to over one million . . .” (p. 6) and Corliss et al. (2011)

determination that between “. . . 575,000 and 1.6 million US youths are estimated to be

living without a homes and without a family . . .” (State Report Card on Childhood

Homelessness as cited in Corliss et al., 2011, p. 1326). Regardless of the incongruence

that can be observed in the estimates of homeless youth, there should be no dissention

that homelessness affects far too many of our students.

Bidwell (2014) postulated “During the 2012-2013 school year, 1,258,182 students

enrolled in public school across the country were homeless . . . [which] is an 8 percent

increase from the previous school year, and more than 85 percent increase from the 2006-

2007 school year” (p. 1). Of these students, “. . . 75,940 were unaccompanied youths,

meaning they were living on their own . . .” (Bidwell, 2014, p.1). Schaffhauser (2016)

utilized the same comparative benchmark when she reported that as of 2016, “. . . the

number of homeless students in the United States has doubled since the 2006-2006

school year . . .” (p. 1).

Burt (2007) accounts that as many as 1.6 to 1.7 million youth become homeless each year because of running away from their families, being kicked out, or having no identified family. Fernandes (2007) discussed previous research results attributing that ". . . 5% of the population ages 12-17 – more than 1 million youth in a given year – experience homelessness . . ." (p. 6) as well as when both *homeless* and *runaway* youth are considered in the number affected, estimates are ". . . between 1 million and 1.7 million . . ." (Fernandes, 2007, p. 1).

More recently, The National Center on Family Homelessness states ". . . a staggering 2.5 million children are now homeless each year in America. This historic high represents one in every 30 children in the United States . . ." (Bassuk, DeCandia, Beach, & Berman, 2016).

Closer to home, in the State of Texas, the number of homeless students, as proposed by Morales (2016), was ". . . more than 113,000, [or] nearly 2 percent of the state's student population . . ." (p. 2). Further concentration on the east Texas region revealed an even higher percentage affected as Morales (2016) maintained ". . . of the nearly 15,000 students at Waco Independent School District last year [2015-2016], nearly 10 percent [1,500] were estimated to be homeless . . ." (p. 1).

Effects of Homelessness

Homelessness is not descriptive characteristic to be checked on an intake form and forgotten, as reinforced by Dunne, Prendergast, and Telford (2010) as they clarified ". . . it is important to realize that homelessness is not an event, but a process involving a

number of contributing factors . . .” (p. 105). This process has many deleterious effects as explored by exiting research.

Coker at al. (2009) noted, “Children who had ever experienced homelessness were more likely to have an emotional, behavioral, or developmental problem, to have received mental health care, and to have witnessed serious violence with a knife than were children who were never homeless . . .” (p. 1446). Gattis (2009) elaborated, “. . . the consequences of homelessness are dire and often include unemployment, poverty, morbidity, and mortality . . .” (p. 1067). This sentiment is reinforced as “. . . experts estimate that [homeless students] are more likely to repeat a grade, four time more likely to drop out of school entirely . . . [as well as being] at risk for physical abuse, sexual abuse, health [and] medical issues . . . ” (Hillard, 2014, p. 1). Bao, Whitbeck and Hoyt (2000) also supported the calamitous effect at they outlined “. . . studies have found higher rates of depressive symptoms, suicidal behavior, and substance abuse among runaway and homeless adolescents than non-runaway youth . . . [including] amplifies[ed] psychological distress . . . , sense of protection from family, [and the amplification] of existing internalization symptoms originating in dysfunctional families . . .” (p. 410).

Bassuk (2010) corroborated the educational effects of homelessness as she reports, “research indicates that homelessness and residential mobility leads to poor school performance, repeating grades, dropping out, and lower rates of high school graduation” (p. 498). “Youth who live away from home for extended periods become *removed* [emphasis added] from the school and systems of support that promote positive development . . .” (Fernandes, 2007, p. 1). This *removal* may not necessarily be

voluntary. "Some homeless youths face barriers to attending school because of transportation problems and the absence of parents or guardians who can provide records and permission for youth to participate in school activities . . ." (Fernandes, 2007, p. 31).

Homelessness, however, can have long lasting effects far beyond the classroom. Youth who experience homelessness have been linked to an increased predisposition to later criminal behavior such as theft, drug dealing, and sexual crimes (Cronley et al., 2015). Fernandes (2007) suggested that because homeless youth are often ". . . removed from the formal economy . . . [they may] resort to illegal activity including stealing and selling drugs in exchange for cash . . ." (p. 31). This connection is reinforced by O'Grady and Gaetz (2004) as they stipulated ". . . for homeless youth, most work takes place in the informal and unregulated economic spheres of society, and includes, among other behaviors, begging and squeegee cleaning, quasi-legal activities (in sex trade, for instance) and criminal activities . . ." (p. 399). These vocational forays may be due to the fact ". . . homeless youths face [so many] challenges in entering the formal job market, largely because they lack the skills and education, their health is [often] compromised, and their inadequate housing makes it difficult to succeed in the labor market . . ." (O'Grady & Gaetz, 2004, p. 403). O'Grady and Gaetz (2004) expatiated:

> Health has long been considered a factor that has an impact on employability. A range of factors associated with being homeless, including lack of sleep, poor nutrition, repeated injuries, and inability to maintain good hygiene, all compromise one's ability to keep healthy and to recover from illness or injury. (p. 409)

These illegal activities may also be non-economic based. In a study performed by Wagner, Carlin, Cauce, and Tenner (2001) it was observed that ". . . over 50% of the [272] youth [surveyed] reported smoking marijuana at least once a week; of these, half were smoking daily . . . [and] almost 80% of the youth had used alcohol in the three months prior to being interviewed . . ." (p. 225)

Some potential ramifications are even more somber than a predisposition towards criminal misbehavior. "Runaway and homeless youth are vulnerable to multiple problems while they are away from a permanent home, including untreated mental health disorders, drug use, and sexual exploitation . . ." (Fernandes, 2007, p. 9). Victimization of this population comes in all forms as demonstrated by Wagner et al. (2001) when they report the incident rate in their 272-subject study as:

> . . . 35% had been beaten up at least once, 47% of the female youth and 37% of the male youth had been propositioned to sell sex, almost one-third of the female youth and 13% of the male youth reported being sexually assaulted, thirty-nine percent had been robbed, 44% had been threatened with a gun or other weapon, and 30% had been shot at. (p. 223)

Even graver, mortality rates for these youth have been found to be 12-40 times that of the general population (Roy, Bolvin, Haley, & Lemire, 1998; Shaw & Dorling 1998), with suicide having been found as the leading cause of death (Roy et al., 2004, p. 571). The National Coalition for the Homeless (2012) reported there were ". . . over one thousand, two hundred, and eighty-nine crimes committed against homeless people by

housed individuals. These violent attacks have cost three hundred and thirty-nine

homeless people their lives . . ." (p. 70).

Basic strains to homeless youth should not be overlooked as well. "Runaway and

homeless youth report other challenges including poor health and lack of basic provisions

such as food . . ." (Fernandes, 2007, p. 10). These challenges include other self-efficacy

issues as well. Waldron (1991) voices ". . . there is no place governed by private

property rule where [s]he [the homeless] is allowed to be . . ." (p. 299). Blomley (2009)

elaborated, ". . . denied spaces of their own, the homeless do not have places to perform

basic liberties, such as sleeping . . . [and] given the scarcity of storage spaces, the

homeless are forced to carry their meager possessions with them . . ." (579). Laws

regarding panhandling restrict the ability for the homeless to obtain charity and the

combination of legal restrictions, commercialism, and social stigma impact the homeless'

ability to perform basic bodily functions as outlined by Waldron (1991):

> In the way we organize common property, we have done all that we can to
>
> prevent people from taking care of elemental needs themselves, quietly, with
>
> dignity, as ordinary human beings. If someone needs to urinate, what he needs
>
> above all as a dignified person is the *freedom* to do so in privacy, and relative
>
> independence of the arbitrary will of anyone else. But we have set things up so
>
> that either the street person must beg for this opportunity, several times a day, as a
>
> favor from people who recoil in horror, or, if he wants to act independently, he
>
> must break the law and risk arrest. (pp. 320-321)

The *independence* of homelessness can quickly develop into *isolation*. This isolation is discussed as disconnection by Fernandes (2007). She notes that a new ". . . concept of 'disconnected' youth has recently gained currency among policymakers who have raised concerns about the negative outcomes these individuals face in adulthood . . ." (Fernandes, 2007, p. 30). These are individuals who, because of a lack of established social networks, experience difficulty as adults, securing housing, procuring employment, pursuing higher educational attainment, and establishing emotional support systems (Fernandes, 2007, p. 30). Reeg (2003) suggested:

> Runaway and homeless youth are among the ranks of our nation' severely disconnected youth. Regardless of whether the "disconnection" is measured by separation from family, absence from school, or non-participation in the economy, youth in runaway and homeless situations typically meet all three conditions. For these young people, their separation from societal institutions is accentuated by their lack of permanent housing, which is not only disruptive in and of itself, but also indicative of the larger socioeconomic instability they are experiencing. (p. 58)

O'Grady and Gaetz (2004) elaborated:

> Obtaining and maintaining what are mostly low-skilled, poorly paying, service sector jobs on the margins of a labor market that is rife with competition from youth and adults with more settled backgrounds proves to be an incredibly challenging task for the [homeless] group. (p. 399)

As a counterpoint, it should be noted that although it would be difficult to discredit the deleterious affects of homelessness, a meta-analysis conducted by Buckner (2008) did question the ability to separate the affects of homelessness from those of very low-SES [socio-economic status] situations of children and young adults. He postulated:

> In studies of homelessness and low-income housed children, it may be easier to discern a poverty related effect than a homeless-specific one because both groups differ far more from children in the general population than they differ from each other in terms of the adversities to which they have been exposed. (Buckner, 2008, p. 732)

Relationship Between Homelessness and Sexual Orientation

The impact of sexual-minority orientation on homelessness has not been as thoroughly examined as other adverse repercussions of "coming out" as articulated by Tunaker (2015) when she penned, ". . . most other minority groups can at least count on the emotional support of their families to help them learn how to cope with discrimination and depression. Gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth are often rejected rather than supported by their families . . ." (Miceli, 2002, p. 200 as cited in Tunaker, 2015, p. 248). The absence of support from the family results in the child not only being homeless but also alone, without the support a homeless child would have if the family unit were homeless as well. This distinction is critical as ". . . important differences in risk exist among homeless youths who live *with* [emphasis added] their parents or guardians compared with those living *separately* [emphasis added] from their primary

caretakers; thus, it is important to examine how sexual orientation may be related to the homeless status . . ." (Corliss et al., 2011, p. 1684).

Prior research tends to illuminate a positive correlation between non-normative sexual identity and potentiality of homelessness. Corliss et al. (2011) recounted, ". . . youths with minority sexual orientations (such as those identifying as gay, lesbian, or bisexual) appear to be disproportionately at risk for homelessness . . ." (p. 1684) and, citing the National Alliance to End Homelessness website on December, 6, 2010, that "a review of research on studies drawn from homeless (i.e. unaccompanied) youth samples found that this population was overrepresented in 17 of 22 studies" (Corliss et. al., 2011, p. 1684).

Dunne et al. (2010) clarified ". . . the risk associated with negotiating a sexual identity against the norm in the current social and material context are likely to mean that an increasing proportion of the young homeless will be lesbian, gay, and bisexual people . . ." (p. 108). The National Alliance to End Homelessness (2012) agreed as they reported "Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals are believed to make up 5-7 percent of the total American population, but studies show that LGBT youth make up anywhere from 20 to 40 percent of all youth experiencing homelessness . . ." (para.2). Research conducted by Corliss et al. (2011) found:

> Approximately 25% of lesbian/gay, 15% of bisexual, and 3% of exclusively
> heterosexual Massachusetts's public high school students were homeless. Sexual-
> minority males and females had an odds of reporting current homelessness that

was between 4 and 13 times that of their exclusively heterosexual peers. (p.

1683)

A similar study by Wagner et al. (2001) of Canadian homeless youths yielded similar

data suggesting out of 272 homeless youths surveyed, ". . . 20% [identified] as

homosexual, and 17% as bisexual . . ." (p. 223).

Precipitating factors to the loss of housing stability seem to be rooted in the

interpersonal relations of the young non-normative sexually oriented family member and

their respective nuclear family. Although, as Kidd (2007) reported, ". . . the family

histories of most homeless youth are troubled often consisting of disrupted and abusive

home environments . . ." (p. 291), the ". . . rejection and victimization within the family

related to minority sexual orientation likely contribute[s] to a greater risk of homelessness

among sexual-minority youths . . ." (State Report Card, as cited in Corliss, et al., 2011, p.

1688).

Gattis (2009) seemed to concur as he explained ". . . family conflict is the primary

cause of homelessness for all youths; in particular, family conflict over a youth's sexual

orientation or gender identity is a major factor that leads to homelessness . . . among

sexual minorities . . ." (p. 1067). D'Augelli (2005) clarified, that the disclosure of an

alternative sexual orientation can result in verbal abuse, physical attacks by family and

other forms of victimization.

The most frequently reported reason given by LGBT youth, in a comprehensive

survey performed by Durso and Gates, (2012), regarding the condition of being

homelessness, is a conscious decision to run away from a family environment which

rejected them because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. The next most frequent reason was being forced out against their desires once they had revealed this sexual orientation or gender identity (Durso & Gates, 2012). These reasons are collaborated by Clatts et al. (1998) as they chronicled ". . . youths frequently cite conflict over sexual identity as a factor in their homelessness . . ." (as cited in Gattis, 2009, p. 1067).

In a 2010 study, Dunne et al. corroborated these proclamations when they reported, ". . . our data also reveal that sexual identity had played an important role in triggering a housing crisis for a sizable minority . . ." (p. 105). In describing one particular case, they specifically identified that ". . . this crisis had been prompted by their family's inability to accept their sexuality" (Dunne et al., 2010, p. 105).

The impact of children's sexual orientation on the potentiality of homelessness has been established in recent research. The possibility that even the disquieting reported numbers of those affected might be underreported ensures the pressing need for identification of the influences that result in the decisions to leave the home.

Summary

Despite variation in the actual number of homeless youth dependent upon the study, all reviewed encapsulated that the occurrence is increasing. Regardless of if the actual number of homeless youth is 1.7 million as reported by Fernandes (2007) or 1,258,182 as detailed by Bidwell (2014), the issue should be of critical importance due to the deleterious effects of homelessness for youth.

Homeless youth are subject to exposure to, and victimization by, physical assault, sexual assault, violence, illicit drug use, and homicide/suicide. They are more likely to engage in illegal activities throughout their life and experience emotional, behavioral, mental health, and developmental issues than their housing stable peers. The overrepresentation of homeless youth, of a sexual-minority sexual orientation, demonstrates a disproportionate impact of such effects on an already marginalized group.

Although it has been proclaimed that individuals of a sexual-minority orientation account for approximately ". . . 5-7 percent of the total American Population . . ." (National Alliance, 2012, para. 2), they can represent anywhere from ". . . 20 to 40 percent of all youth experiencing homelessness . . ." (National Alliance, 2012, para. 2). This overrepresentation highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the influences that affect sexual-minority youth's decision to become homeless.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Introduction

The vastness, complexity, and depth of queer studies and research does not allow for compartmentalization within the construct of any one "methodology." It is perhaps best clarified by Nash and Browne (2010) when they proclaimed, ". . . one could argue that there is, in fact, no 'queer method' (that is, 'methods' specifically as research techniques), in the sense that 'queer' lives can be addressed through a plethora of methods, and *all* methods can be put to the task of *questioning normativities* [emphasis added] . . ." (p. 12). Giffney (2004) concurred espousing, "Queer theory's task lies in visibilizing, critiquing, and separating the normal (statistically determined) form the normative (morally determined) . . ." (p. 75).

Queer studies, as a research design, is at its very core, incongruent with the attempt to standardize the processes such as theoretical framework, methodology, methods, data collection that one expects to observe when a "design" is designated. Research designs such as: (a) mixed method, (b) correlational, (c) experimental and (d) case study provide an inherent and detailed framework for a researcher to follow

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throughout the course of the research project. This framework gives both detailed specifications to the researcher on how the research should be accomplished and garners the inquirer with imbedded validity and acceptance if concluded with fidelity. These types of research methods are prescriptive and generalizable in their own respective ways and each has a place in the apothecary of the modern researcher.

It seems intuitive that qualitative methodologies suit the multifarious nature of queer studies. The distinction between quantitative and qualitative inquiry:

> Is not related to the difference between quantitative and qualitative data, but a difference in searching for causes versus searching for happenings. Quantitative researchers have pressed for explanation and control; qualitative researchers have pressed for understanding the complex interrelationships among all that exists. (Stake, 1995, p. 37)

This drive to understand is what gives qualitative inquiry, and specifically case study research, its métier. Therefore, due to its ability to illuminate relationships within "complex social phenomena" (Yin, 2014, p.4), the case study methodology has been selected for this research.

Case Study as a Methodology

Gerring (2007) defined the case study as ". . . an intensive study of a single case . . . with an aim to generalize across a larger set of cases of the same general type . . ." (p. 65). Meyer (2001) describes a case study as ". . . a study [that] consist [of] detailed investigation . . . with a view to providing an analysis of the context and processes involved in the phenomenon under study . . ." (p. 329). It is denoted by Yin (2014) that

". . . as a research method, the case study is used in many situations, to contribute to our knowledge of individual group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena . . ." (p. 4). Gerring (2007) promoted, when ". . . in-depth knowledge of an individual example is more helpful than fleeting knowledge about a larger number of examples . . . [and] we [can] gain better understanding of the whole by focusing on a key part . . ." (p. 1) a case study approach may be appropriate.

It may not be as prevalent ". . . as experimental or quasi-experimental approaches to discovery, [however] advocates of case study method suggest there are benefits to this method that typically explores small sample size populations in a deep fashion. . ." (Pable, 2013. p. 70). It can be surmised that case study is a methodological approach keenly ". . . suited to understanding perceptions and influences affecting homeless persons . . ." (Pable, 2013, p. 71) for as stated by Stake (1995) "We study a case when it itself is of very specific interest . . ." (p. xi).

Stake (1995) considered a case study as " . . . the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances . . ." (p. xi). Case study, detailed by Neuman (2011) as a methodology that ". . . intensively investigates one or a small set of cases, focuses on many details within each case and context. In short, it examines *both* [emphasis added] details of each case's internal features as well as the surrounding situation . . ." (p. 42). It has been stated that the case study ". . . emphasizes episodes of nuance, the sequentiality of happenings, [and] the wholeness of the individual . . ." (Stake, 1995, p. xii).

By considering the surrounding influences, the case study becomes a ". . . multi-perspectival analysis . . . [meaning] that the researcher considers not just the voice and perspective of the actors, but also of the relevant group of actors and the interaction between them . . ." (Tellis, 1997, p. 2). The utilization of case study is then accordingly appropriate when, as researchers, ". . . we are interested in them [the cases] for both their uniqueness and commonality, we seek to understand them, and we would like to hear their stories . . ." (Stake, 1995, p. 1).

The true strength of the case study as a methodological approach inherently lies in its ability to ". . . enable the researcher to gain a *holistic* [emphasis added] view of a certain phenomenon or series of events . . . [thus] providing a round picture since many sources of evidence were [are] used . . ." (Noor, 2008, p. 1603). It is the ". . . contextual nature of the case study and its strength in addressing contemporary phenomena in real life context . . ." (Meyer, 2001, p. 330) that contributes to its authenticity. Suryani (2008) included three strengths of case studies in her comparison of that methodology to ethnography: (a) ". . . a case study may offer larger details about a particular phenomenon . . ." (b) through "naturalistic generalizations . . . people can share and understand others' social experience" and (c) ". . . a case study provides a holistic interpretation and always refers to a social context . . . , does not involve any treatments, experiments, or manipulated social settings . . . [and] will be considered as natural phenomena in peoples real lives . . ." (p. 120).

Pable (2013) described, "a case study method permits an in-depth, extended engagement with individuals which may have extended advantages" (p. 72). This

engagement is potentially why it has been stated that the case study "give[s] a voice to the powerless and voiceless" (Tellis, 1997, p. 2), and emphasized by Hancock and Algozzine (2011) that the ultimate goal of case study research is ". . . to understand the situation under investigation primarily from the participant's, not the researcher's perspective. This is called the *emic* or insider's perspective, as opposed to the *etic*, or outsider's perspective . . ." (p. 9). Stake (1995) also similarly defined *etic* issues as the researchers issues and *emic* issues as ". . . issues of the actors, the people who belong to the case . . . [or] issues from the inside . . ." (p. 20). It is the emic perspective that allows case study research its ability to, as Tellis (1997) described, give voice.

The case study methodology is less structured than many types of research methodologies. It is the flexibility of the case study model that ". . . allows tailoring the design and data collection procedures to the [specific] research questions . . ." (Meyer, 2001, p. 330) and the openness for "the use of theory or conceptual categories that guide the research and analysis of data" (Meyer, 2001, p. 331).

Not only is the case study methodology uniquely tailored for the multidimensional variation observed with complex interactions due to its flexibility and deep examination, it has also been argued that ". . . certain kinds of information can be difficult or even impossible to tackle by means *other* [emphasis added] than qualitative approaches such as the case study . . ." (Sykes, 1990, as cited in Meyer, 2001, p. 330). Once the decision to embrace the use of case study research has been made, design considerations, such as *disciplinary orientation*, *type*, and *characteristics*, should be evaluated for appropriateness (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011).

Disciplinary Orientations of the Case Study Design

The ethnographic design is one case study orientation. Hancock and Algozzine (2011) described this orientation as " . . . originating in anthropology, ethnographic case study research is used to explore the observable, and learned patterns of behavior, customs, and ways of life of a culture-sharing group . . ." (p. 35). "The major goal of ethnography is to move from what we can easily observe to what the people we observe truly feel and mean internally . . ." (Neuman, 2011, p. 424). "As a process, ethnography involves extended observations of a group, most often through *participant observation*, in which the researcher is *immersed* in the day-to-day lives of the people and observes and interviews the group participants . . ." (Creswell, 2007, p. 68). Yin (2014) added, ". . . ethnographies usually require long period in the field and emphasize detailed observational and interview evidence . . ." (p. 21).

Presence within the dynamic being studied seems to be a central tenet of the ethnographic study. This concept is reinforced by Suryani (2008) as she elaborated, ". . . some people think that researchers should stay inside a community of people being studied for a period of time. Moreover, long-term involvement and observation are considered *necessary* [emphasis added] to understand the complexity of people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours . . ." (p. 122). Other characteristics of the ethnographic orientation are: (a) social relationship with the participants, (b) the utilization of the researcher as an important research instrument, and (c) naturalistic observation (Suryani, 2008).

Historical analysis is another case study orientation. "Historical case studies are often descriptions of events, programs, or organizations as they have evolved over time. Extending traditional historical research, historical case study research typically includes direct observation and interviews of key participants . . ." (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 35). They are designed to ". . . produce more than a chronological listing of event . . . [they] result in a researcher's descriptive interpretation of factors that both cause and result from the events . . ." (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 35).

Psychological and sociological orientations to case study research are also observed. These are often heavily theory-based and used to connect established concepts regarding human behavior, either in isolation or included within groups, to observed behavior (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011). The theoretical grounding of such studies seems to be the determinant factor for classification as such. It would seem, then, that any study could ultimately fall within the representation of one of these, if not multiple, orientations.

Characteristics of Case Study Design

Case study research designs may, in addition to their disciplinary orientation, be distinguished by the characteristics of their respective *purpose* or as constructed by Creswell (2007) ". . . terms of the intent . . ." (p. 74). These characteristics of purpose or intent, have been distinguished by Hancock and Algozzine (2011) as: (a) intrinsic, (b) instrumental, or (c) collective.

Hancock and Algozzine (2011) elucidated that ". . . researchers may engage in an *intrinsic* case study when they want to know more about a particular individual, group,

event, or organization . . ." (p. 36). Stake (1995) also used the term intrinsic and suggest

that the designation is descriptive when researchers who ". . . are interested in it, but not

because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general problem, but

because we need to learn about that particular case . . ." (1995, p. 3). Stake (1995)

suggested ". . . one of the most important things to remember is that for intrinsic case

study, [the case] is dominant; the case is of he highest importance . . ." (p. 16).

An *instrumental* case study's primary goal ". . . is to better understand a

theoretical question or problem . . ." (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 36). When it is

utilized, Hancock and Algozzine (2011) clarified, an *instrumental case* study ". . .

enhanced understanding of the particular issue being examined is of *secondary* [emphasis

added] importance to a greater insight into the theoretical explanation that underpins the

issue . . ." (p. 36). "The case then [simply] becomes a vehicle to better understand the

issue . . ." (Stake, 1995, as cited in Creswell, 2007, p. 245). From a chronological aspect,

". . . the researcher [first] focuses on an issue or concern, and then selects one bounded

case to illustrate the issue . . ." (Creswell, 2007, p. 74). Stake (1995) elaborates that at

times ". . . we will have a research question, a puzzlement, a need for general

understanding, and feel that we may get insight into a question by studying a particular

case . . . [where] the use of [that particular] case study is to understand something else . .

." (p. 3). A ". . . case study [that] is instrumental to accomplishing something other than

understanding this particular case . . . may [be] call[ed] . . . [an] *instrumental case study* .

. ." (Stake, 1995, p. 3). For the ". . . instrumental case study, [the issue] is dominant; we

start and end with the issues dominant . . ." (Stake, 1995, p. 16). The use of multiple

instrumental case studies concentrating on the same issue is described as *collective* case study research.

Collective case study research not only augments the instrumental case study by reiteration, but also ". . . attempts to address an issue while also adding to the literature base that helps us better conceptualize a theory . . ." (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 37). Stake (1995) elucidated that at times ". . . we may choose . . . several [cases] rather than just one . . ." and that ". . . each study is instrumental . . ." (pp. 3-4) to the fabrication of knowledge on the topic of study. Stake (1995) also refered to this strategy as a collective case study (pp. 3-4).

Creswell, (2007) expanded on the parameters of a collective case study as he proposed:

> In a *collective case study*, the one issue or concern is again selected, but the inquirer selects multiple case studies to illustrate the issue. The researcher might select for study several programs from several research sites or multiple programs within a single site. Often the inquirer purposefully selects multiple cases to show different perspectives on the issue. (p. 74)

Collective case studies may also be regarded as simply one type of multiple-case design (Yin, 2014), with no further distinction regarding design being made

Types of Case Study Design

The ". . . three major types of case study research design are *exploratory*, *explanatory*, and *descriptive* . . ." (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 37). Exploratory case study attempts to answer questions typically framed by the pronoun *what* (Yin, 2014).

This type of design ". . . seek[s] to define research questions of a subsequent study or to determine the feasibility of research procedures . . ." (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 37). It is ". . . often a prelude to additional research efforts . . ." (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 37) and does not necessarily need to be constrained to the case study model. The *exploratory* question can, in fact, be answered by *any* of the five research methods: (a) survey, (b) experiment, (c) archival analysis, (d) history, or (e) case study (Yin, 2014).

Explanatory case studies, in contrast, seek to answer ". . . *how* [emphasis added] and *why* . . . [emphasis added]" questions (Yin, 2014, p. 10). They strive ". . . to establish cause-and-effect relationships . . . determine[ing] how events occur and which ones may influence particular outcomes . . ." (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 37). These types of questions often pertain to "operational links needing to be traced over time, rather than mere frequencies or incidence" (Yin, 2014, p. 10) and can be fulfilled by: (a) experiments, (b) histories, or (c) case studies (Yin, 2014).

Descriptive case studies "attempt to present a complete description of a phenomenon within its context" (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 37). They focus on one event in isolation with no attempt or presupposition to generalize to other situations (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, Yin, 2014).

Similar studies focusing on *situations* in their *natural context* and grounded within a theoretical framework have utilized case study methodology such as Hughes (1998) study on the positive behavioral changes of young men who had demonstrated previous violent behavior but had since transitioned away from them as referenced in Hancock and Algozzine (2011, p. 18-19).

The importance of theoretical development as a framework for case studies is also corroborated by Yin (2014) as he proclaims it is ". . . highly desired . . ." (p. 37), so for this study: Brofenbrenner's ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) will be utilized.

Yin (2014) explained, ". . . the theoretical propositions that . . . [go] into the initial design of your case study, as empirically enhanced by . . . [the] case study's findings, will form the groundwork for an analytic generalization . . ." (p. 41). This *analytic generalization* will allow the researcher to generalize the findings of the study at a level, according to Yin (2014) ". . . higher than that of a specific case (or experiment) . . ." (p. 41). *Analytic generalization* differs from the more traditional concept of what Yin (2014) describes as *statistical generalization*, which is garnered via empirical studies. These studies utilize samples to forecast strength of relationships for populations. In a case study, the *case* is not a *sample* of a population but an " . . . opportunity to shed empirical light about some theoretical concepts or principles . . ." (Yin, 2014, p. 40) and the influence of those concepts on like phenomenon.

Because of the ability of case studies to provide generalizable knowledge if done correctly, it becomes important to justify both the respective study's validity and reliability. This methodology has been previously observed to be valid and reliable, as proclaimed by Tellis, (1997) when he penned, "Yin, Stake, and others who have wide experience in this methodology have developed robust procedures. When these procedures are followed, the researcher will be following methods as well developed and tested as any in the scientific field . . ." (p. 1).

Yin (2014) further elaborated on the specifics of ensuring reliability and validity as he declared, ". . . four test . . . have been commonly used to establish the quality of any empirical social research . . ." and ". . . because case study research is a part of this larger body, the four test are also relevant to case study research . . ." (p. 45). These four tests are: (a) construct validity, (b) internal validity, (c) external validity, and (d) reliability (Yin, 2104).

Validity of the Case Study Design

Validity is perspicuously described by Neuman (2011) as "truthfulness" (p. 208). It is simply, as further elaborated by Neuman (2011) as ". . . how well we measure social reality using our constructs about it . . ." (p. 208). It can be delineated into three distinct spheres: (a) construct, (b) Internal, and (c) external.

Construct validity.

Construct validity or the identification of the ". . . correct operational measures for the concepts being studied" (Yin, 2014, p. 46), could seem counter to the flexibility for which case studies are often applauded, but that does not have to be the case. It is generally considered "for measures with multiple indicators . . . [and] answers the question: if the measure is valid, do the various indicators operate in a consistent manner . . ." (Neuman, 2011, p. 213). "In this form of validity, the issue is legitimacy of the application of a given concept or theory to established facts . . ." (Meyer, 2001, p. 345).

Suryani (2008) added ". . . the credibility of a case study might be obtained through continuously making descriptions and interpretations during the study . . ." (p. 118). If the researcher can be vigilant in unbiased transparency and add specificity,

substantiated by the participants, to the key aspects of the study, subjectivity can be decreased and construct validity increased. This process adds trustworthiness for the reader that the researcher accurately described the phenomenon.

It has been discussed that to mediate the potential concerns of construct validity, the researcher may utilize strategies as stressed by Yin (2014) such as: (a) use[ing] multiple sources of evidence, (b) establish[ing] a chain of evidence, and (c) have[ing] the draft case study reviewed by participants prior to finalization. Although these strategies to increase construct validity are vital if *objective* observations are to be made, *this study* is attempting to present a *subjective* view.

Marshall and Rossman (2006) clarified, ". . . when the researcher is using in-depth interviews as the *sole* [emphasis added] way of gathering data . . . [it is through] the conceptual framework . . .[and its] purpose to uncover and describe the participant's perspective on events . . .[i.e.], the subjective view, is what matters . . ." (p. 102). To that end, the conceptual framework of Brofenbrenner's EST will be utilized, but not in isolation.

Leitz, Langer, and Furman (2006) also emphasized the subjective with regards to the concept of validity, or in there term of choice, rigor. They declared

> . . . rigorous qualitative work engages in activities that would assist us in giving priority to the meanings of participants over those which are our own. Therefore, efforts taken to manage issues of reactivity and bias can help social work researchers to describe qualitative data in a way that is credible . . . (Leitz, Langer, & Furman, 2006, p. 444)

This credibility can be described as trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) reiterated "trustworthiness is established when findings as closely as possible reflect the meanings as described by the participants (as cited in Leitz, Langer, & Furman, 2006, p. 444).

To this end of creating trustworthiness, Hancock and Algozzine (2011) suggested five strategies to be utilized when confirming case study findings. Of these, three were employed in this study.

First; the researcher harnessed the ". . . most powerful strategy to confirm a report's findings . . ." (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 71. The results of each interview, in the form of a typed transcription, were presented to the interviewee for review and clarification regarding both literal and emotional accuracy. Hancock and Algozzine (2011) stressed, ". . . the goal of gaining feedback from those studied is to gather their perceptions of the plausibility of the findings based on the information that the participants themselves provided . . ." (p. 71).

Secondly, Hancock and Algozzine (2011) suggested ". . . soliciti[ng] scrutiny of the final report from experts on the topic under investigation . . ." (p. 71).. In satisfaction of this strategy, the researcher solicited involvement of a dissertation committee member for this dissertation who holds a Ph. D. in social work, as well as LMSW-AP, ACSW, and C-SSWS credentials, and who currently serves as a Professor and the Associate Dean and Director of Social Work for a State university in Texas. He, as a member of the dissertation committee, both reviewed drafts of, and participated in the defense of, this research.

Lastly, a third strategy, as outlined by Hancock and Algozzine (2011) was also harnessed. They supported that ". . . the researcher's articulation of personal biases . . . combined with an explanation of how the researcher prevented these biases from influencing the research process and findings lessens the likelihood that the researcher will be accused of producing contrived findings . . ." (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 71) thus bolstering the validity of the study.

Internal validity.

Meyer (2001) maintained, "internal validity concerns the validity of the postulated relationships among the concepts" (p. 346) while Neuman (2011) posited, "internal validity occurs when the independent variable, and nothing else, influences the dependent variable" (p. 292). With regards to case studies, Yin (2014) outlined two points to be considered when reflecting on internal validity: (a) the potential for the incorrect identification of a causal relationship, and (b) the tendency for the researcher to make inferences regarding unobserved relationships between variables, events, or occurrences. Succinctly, ". . . the main problem of internal validity as a criterion in qualitative research is that it is often not open to scrutiny . . ." (Meyer, 2001, p. 346). These concerns can be remedied by the use of pattern matching and logic models during the data analysis phase, as well as explanation building and rival theory explanations during the synthesis of findings (Yin, 2014).

For this study, internal validity, or as discussed previously, trustworthiness, was bolstered by the minimization of researcher bias and the faithful representation of the participant's perception of relationships among the factors resulting in their becoming

homeless. In addition, the utilization of member checking at each stage of the interview process also ensured that the perceptions of the participants were expressed in an accurate and truthful manner.

External validity.

External validity relates to the ". . . problem of knowing whether a study's findings are generalizable beyond the immediate study . . ." (Yin, 2014, p. 48). In case studies, as previously purported, this would be defined as analytic generalization by Yin (2014) and focus on the relationship of the study's results within a theoretical framework. The enhancement of external validity stems from the research design, such as the use of theoretical underpinnings in single-case studies and replication logic in multiple-case studies.

Robert Stake (1995) suggested that ". . . generalizations about a case or a few cases in a particular situation might not be thought of as generalizations and may need some label such as *petite generalizations,* but they are generalizations that regularly occur all the way in a case study . . ." (p.7). He also described the presence of naturalistic generalizations. These are described as ". . . conclusions arrived at through personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves . . ." (Stake, 1995, p. 85). Stake (1995) also clarified however, that as researchers ". . . we do not choose case study design to optimize production of generalizations. More traditional comparative and correlational studies do this better, but valid modification of generalization can occur in case study . . ." (p. 8).

Perhaps, as astutely inferred by Stake (1995), ". . . the real business of case study is particularization, not generalization." (p. 8). He detailed his semantics by explaining that:

> We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is
>
> different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on
>
> uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from,
>
> but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (p. 8)

This approach is ". . . centered on a more intuitive, empirically-grounded generalization . . . [and is] based on the harmonious relationship between the reader's experience and the case study itself . . ." (Stake, 1995, as cited in Tellis, 1997, p. 2). Stake (1995) believed, as reported by Tellis (1997) that, ". . . the data gathered by case studies would often resonate experientially with a broad cross section of readers, thereby facilitating a greater understanding of the phenomenon . . ." (pp. 3-4).

Reliability of the Case Study Design

Reliability is the ability of ". . . a factor yielding the same or comparable results in different clinical experiments or statistical trials . . ." (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 92). Although ". . . many qualitative researchers see the quantitative approach to reliability as a cold, fixed mechanical instrument that one applies repeatedly to static lifeless material . . ." (Neuman, 2011, p. 214) it certainly has a place, albeit in a modified structure, in case study research. Neuman (2011) elaborated, "In qualitative studies, we consider a range of data sources and employ multiple measurement methods. We do not become locked into the quantitative-positivist ideas of replication, equivalence, and

subpopulation reliability . . ." (p. 214). Because of the fluid nature of the phenomenon from both a time and context aspect, reliability focuses on repeatability of the *same* results for the *same* case, not the *same* results for other cases. As posited by Miles and Huberman (1994), ". . . reliability focuses on whether the process of the study is consistent and reasonable stable over time and across researchers and methods . . ." (as cited in Meyer, 2001, p. 348). The reframing of the concept of reliability, from the traditional positivist approach, shifts the emphasis from the research model's performance outside of the specific study, to the refinement and description of all aspects of the study *within* the study, ensuring that the analysis of the specific study results would be consistent regardless of researcher. The departure away from necessitating consistence across cases and researchers addresses the reality that ". . . differences between replicated studies using different researchers [and different specific cases] are to be expected . . ." (Meyer, 2001, p. 348).

Yin (2014) encapsulated the contextual perception shift needed, for the concept of reliability within case studies, as he stated, ". . . the general way of approaching the reliability problem is to make as many steps as operational as possible and to conduct research as if someone is looking over your shoulder . . . [ensuring that] an auditor could in principal repeat the procedures and hopefully arrive at the same results . . ." (p. 49). This can be done during the data collection aspect of the research by utilizing a robust, transparent, and thorough study protocol.

Case Study as Appropriate for This Study

Case study design is relevant for exploratory research situations where the research question is in the form of *what*, a goal of the researcher is to ". . . develop pertinent hypothesis and propositions for further inquiry . . ." (Yin, 2014, p. 10) and the researcher does not have control of the behavioral events being observed (Yin, 2014). The research question for this study is: what influences affected homeless, sexual-minority students' decision to leave home? Its focus on the *discovery* of potential influences instead of deeper analysis of *known* influences differentiates the appropriateness of an exploratory case study versus an explanatory case study (Yin, 2014). It is the researcher's belief that the distinguishing of influences affecting sexual-minority students' decision to leave home will identify research questions regarding the formulation of these influences for future research. Potential research questions arising from this exploratory research, it was determined, would best be answered with *how* or *why* questions in future studies and be more appropriate for the explanatory case study model. Yin's (2003) description of an exploratory case study being used to ". . . explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes . . ." (as cited in Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 548) seems to substantiate this type as apropos for this study.

Further research demonstrates that the case study approach, of which this study incorporated, has been advocated ". . . for its use with a specific population – the homeless . . ." (Pable, 2013, p. 70). A case study has the ability to focus on a contemporary phenomenon when the boundaries and relationship between context and

phenomenon is not clearly evident (Yin, 1994). "The use of case study to probe an area of interest in depth is particularly appropriate . . ." (Noor, 2008, p. 1602). "It is not intended as a study for an entire organization. Rather it is intended to focus on a particular issue, feature, or unit of analysis . . ." (Noor, 2008, p. 1602) and elaborated further by Hancock and Algozzine (2011) as an ". . . intensive analysis and descriptions of a single unit or system bounded by time and space . . ." (p. 10).

For this research, case study methodology was selected for precisely this reason. It was intended to be: (a) an intensive analysis and description of a single unit (the decision making process of sexual-minority students regarding becoming homeless), (b) bounded not by time and space but instead by definition and context. This multiple case study was exploratory in type to both generate research topics for future explanatory research as well as add to the current knowledge base regarding the phenomenon.

Data Collection

Strategy.

This study employed a purposeful sampling strategy. Creswell (2007) explained ". . . this means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform and understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study . . ." (p. 125). Care should be taken when considering this designation as Yin (2014) warned; it may have "conceptual and terminological problems" (p. 42). He charged ". . . the "use of the 'sample' portion of the term . . . risks misleading others into thinking that the case comes from universe or population of like-cases,

undesirably reigniting the specter of statistical generalization . . ." (Yin, 2014, pp. 43-44), which is certainly not the intent of the author.

This strategy was effectuated by solicitation, in the form of a letter of introduction (see Appendix A). It was distributed in and around service facilities for the homeless in the Texarkana, and Houston, Texas area by the researcher. The solicitation described the study, the desired participants, and contact information of the researcher. Casual dialogue between potential participants to describe the study and determine appropriateness of the candidate as a participant corresponded with the solicitation process.

Reality.

Originally, solicitation was pursued via social service organizations, which serve the homeless sexual-minority population. These organizations, each very receptive at first, ultimately decided not to assist in participant solicitation. It is the opinion of the researcher that these organizations, appropriately protective of the populations they serve, were fearful of exploitation of their clients by someone they perceived as an outsider.

Once the attempts of collaboration with service providers were abandoned; face-to-face interviews with the current homeless population were pursued in the Greater Third-ward and Montrose sections of Houston, Texas. Although these areas are home to numerous entities that provide services to the sexual-minority population, the homeless individuals interviewed seemed very homophobic. They appeared reluctant to discuss non-normative sexual identification or orientation out of fear of peer reprisal and were

very agitated over perceived inequities regarding specialized services and assistance offered to the sexual-minority homeless.

Once the futile face-to-face solicitation was abandoned, procurement via social-media was undertaken. The researcher attempted to place advertisements for participants in sexual-minority oriented online publications but was not permitted. A posting, by the researcher, on the social-networking platform of Facebook was placed requesting volunteers for participation but no responses were observed.

Successful recruitment of participants was eventually accomplished by a combination word-of-mouth and social-media strategy. A personal recommendation and introduction to the first participant by a professional who worked with one of the first contacted service providers secured not only the first volunteer but also a gateway into his validated sexual-minority network. This led to an eventual posting of a request for study volunteers by the first participant in *his* social-media network, which garnered the other two volunteers.

Participants.

Three volunteers, over the age of 17, who met the three pronged criteria of: (a) being homeless, (b) consider themselves to be non-normative regarding sexual orientation, and (c) made the conscious decision to leave home, were interviewed by the researcher to discern commonalities of themes which precipitated the choice to become homeless. The volunteers were chosen to participate by the researcher in a "first come, first serve" basis i.e., the first three eligible participants to volunteer were selected.

Informed consents forms (see Appendix B) were given to and signed by each participant. A three-tiered interview protocol was utilized (see Appendix C).

Tier one of the interview process involved the initial one-on-one interviews with the selected participants in a private and familiar environment, to ensure confidentiality and repose. The questions (see Appendix C) were scripted to ensure between-subject reliability. To address validity concerns, once transcribed, the interviews were dispersed back to the participants for review, verification, and modification if warranted.

Tier two questions were developed respective to the individual responses to the level one questions and the resulting necessitated clarification or elaboration. These were administered either face-to-face in a secure and familiar environment, by email, or telephone as preferred by participant. The responses were documented and validated by the participant by a complete review of the final study.

Lastly, tier three questions were developed respective to the individual responses to the tier two questions. These were also administered in an environment of the participant's choosing, most often by email.

All data and related research documents were maintained under locked conditions in the researcher's home. Only the researcher had direct access to the data and documents. Confidentiality was ensured at all times. Upon completion of the dissertation study, all maintained files will be secured for a period of three years and then destroyed per IRB requirements.

Data Analysis

As previously stipulated, the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and evaluated for thematic commonalities. The interviews were recorded using two devices simultaneously. The researcher utilized two digital recording instruments to ensure redundancy, with a third older digital recorder serving as a backup recording device. The recordings were uploaded to the researcher's personal computer and eventually into an internet-based transcription service named rev.com for transcription from audio to text.

The text transcriptions analyzed by the researcher by hand to identify commonalities between the participant's experiences. These commonalities were then compared and contrasted to responses. These commonalities were constructed into themes, which were then examined and discussed with regards to inclusion within an appropriate theoretical framework as detailed within the ecological systems theory posited by Bronfenbrenner (1979).

Role of the Researcher

The role of the researcher in qualitative research cannot be dismissed. Stake (1995) discussed the interaction between researcher and phenomena when he purported that ". . . phenomena need accurate description, but even observational interpretation of those phenomena will be shaped by the mood, the experience, [and] the intention of the researcher . . ." (p. 95). To foster credibility, transparency regarding the researcher's perceptions of role, impact, and motivation is necessitated.

Researcher's perception of role.

The desired role of the researcher for this study was that of the *Case Researcher as Biographer* as detailed by Stake (1995). The researcher attempted to faithfully recount

the *life history* of each of the participants as they relate to their respective decisions to

leave home. Effort were made to authentically present both the factual information and

corresponding emotion of self-reported relevant events to capture the quintessence of the

phenomena without bias or external revision and refinement. The desired goal of the

researcher was to impact no more of an impression within the transference of the

individual's story to the reader than that of a stenographer.

Although absence of impact is the researcher's goal, subconscious manipulation

and bias can permeate any translation, regardless of intent. With that in mind, it is

prudent that the researcher presented a veracious revelation of background and

motivations for engaging the study.

The researcher's background.

The researcher of this study identifies as a middle-aged, middle-class SES,

Caucasian, heterosexual male. As such, he believes he has always been afforded the

luxury of belonging to the dominant social-construct in which he resides. Regardless of

his station of privilege, or perhaps because of it, he has always felt the drive to help those

who do not possess the resources to help themselves. From an early career in child and

adolescent mental health to his current career in education, the desire to alleviate

emotional turmoil and pain has remained a constant agency.

Having had both a friend with whom he worked and a very close family member

suffer through the fear, anxiety, and tribulations of feeling and expressing themselves in a

way deemed non-normative by the dominant social-construct, the researcher is

encumbered by the unfairness of human beings being forced to live disingenuously to avoid condemnation of others under the guise of morality.

Having stumbled on to the disproportionate occurrence rate of homelessness among youth who associate with a sexual-minority sexual orientation and the corresponding horrific repercussions the state of homelessness for anyone, much less the young, through a research methodology assignment, the tragic phenomena was uncovered and the focus of the researcher's dissertation revealed. As an educator, the researcher was shocked that such a plight exists. As a human, the researcher can no longer look away.

Researcher perspective.

Although the researcher is most certainly an outsider, it is his pledge to convey an *emic* perspective. Creswell (2007) defines an *emic* perspective as ". . . when the researcher reports the views of the informants . . ." (p. 242), as opposed to an *etic* perspective where ". . . the researcher reports his or her own personal views . . ." (p. 242).

As an outsider to the social construct of the research participants on multiple levels (i.e. sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, and perhaps even race and gender), it does not seem to the researcher that personal predisposed views, opinions, or meaning self-constructed from such a diverse background would be prudent or valid in the analysis of this research, especially with regards to the narrative conveyed by the participants and their respective emotional extension. However, with regards to the role of public education in the creation of interventions to alleviate potential impediments that were uncovered and are discussed in the upcoming Summary, Conclusions, Implications,

and Recommendation sections, the researcher will present biases and opinions garnered from his background in educational administration. The opinions will most certainly be grounded by reflection upon both professional and personal experiences and their subsequent emotional extension.

Communicating the Findings

The findings of this study are discussed in the following two chapters. Chapter IV introduces the participants, details perceived influences and lived experiences, both prior to and after becoming homeless, and develops thematic commonalities within their *stories*. Chapter V continues the examination of the commonalities within the three participants' experiences with regard to influences that impacted the eventuality of becoming homeless through a theoretical lens of Brofenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory.

It is the hope of the researcher that once they are extrapolated, identified and examined, the commonalities that exist within the influences that affected the decision of sexual-minority youth to leave home, thus becoming homeless, are communicated by the publication of this dissertation to stakeholders within the public educational administrative sphere to create impactful policies and procedures which will mediate the impact of sexual-minority status on the prevalence of homelessness and the subsequent, ineluctable and deleterious effects. The research also has the intent that the findings of this study will also be communicated via inclusion in the growing body of research regarding homelessness and sexual orientation.

Summary

Despite variation in the actual number of homeless youth dependent upon the study, all reviewed encapsulated that the occurrence is increasing. Regardless of if the actual number of homeless youth is 1.7 million as reported by Fernandes (2007) or 1,258,182 as detailed by Bidwell (2014), the issue should be of critical importance due to the deleterious effects of homelessness for youth.

Homeless youth are subject to exposure to, and victimization by, physical assault, sexual assault, violence, illicit drug use, and homicide/suicide. They are more likely to engage in illegal activities throughout their life and experience emotional, behavioral, mental health, and developmental issues than their housing stable peers. The overrepresentation of homeless youth of a sexual-minority sexual orientation demonstrates a disproportionate impact of such effects on an already marginalized group.

Although it has been proclaimed that individuals of a sexual-minority orientation account for approximately ". . . 5-7 percent of the total American Population . . ." (National Alliance, 2012, para. 2), they can represent anywhere from ". . . 20 to 40 percent of all youth experiencing homelessness . . ." (National Alliance, 2012, para. 2). This overrepresentation highlights the need for a deeper understanding of the influences that affect this segment of the population's decision to become homeless.

A qualitative case study approach was incorporated to derive thematic similarities between influences affecting the decision of homeless sexual-minority students to leave home. Aspects of *validity* and *reliability*, perhaps more appropriately defined as *trustworthiness*, will be addressed by using three strategies as communicated by Hankoch and Algozzine (2011): (a) review and fact checking of interview transcripts by the

participants to ensure accuracy, (b) review of findings by an expert in the field of study independent of the study for validation, and (c) articulation of researcher's personal biases.

The findings and implications of this study are discussed in the following two chapters. In chapter IV, each participant's profile is presented, structured as *his or her story* and utilizing *their words*. The immergence of common themes regarding the influences that led the participants towards homelessness are then identified and discussed. General identified themes, and potential idiosyncrasies are advanced. Chapter V examines these commonalities, within the three participants experiences, with regard to influences that impacted the eventuality of becoming homeless as examined through a theoretical lens of Brofenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory. Chapter VI advances the implications of the study, including recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

Introduction

A qualitative case study approach was incorporated to derive thematic similarities between influences affecting the decision of homeless sexual-minority students to leave home. Three participants were solicited via a variety of methods including: (a) solicitation via service organizations, (b) individual referral, and (c) social media. The participants read and signed the IRB approved informed consent forms and were notified that the initial interviews would be recorded, transcribed, and submitted to them for editing and final approval. All participants agreed to the study consideration and proceeded to participate willingly as research participants.

Profile of Participants

Three participants contributed to this study. Each was assigned a pseudonym that reflected the area in which they currently reside. They will be referred to in the remainder of this study as: (a) Houston, (b) Los Angeles, and (c) New York.

Houston.

Houston is a mid 40's Caucasian female by birth that identifies as a Trans man with a straight sexual orientation. Trans men, as described by Hill and Mays (2013) ". . . are people whose experience is usually that of being assigned female at birth an socialized as such, to determine at some later point that their gender identity is masculine to the extent that they desire to live full-time as a man . . ." (p. 23).

Houston became homeless at the age of fourteen, on Christmas day, when years of strife between him and his mother seemed to culminate in her literally chasing him out of the family home for a reason seemingly unrelated to gender identification. Houston spent the remaining years of high school "couch surfing" or living with friend's families.

To understand the underlying tension in existence in the home prior to that Christmas day, one would need to be aware of the family dynamics. Houston was raised in a "Baptist home" by "devout Christians" who by his account, attended church "every Sunday" and "every Wednesday." His father left the home when he was twelve and his brother moved out when he was thirteen, leaving just him and his mother, a nurse by profession.

Houston recollected being as young a four years old and feeling constrained by his parent's gender expectations and his own preferences. He recalled:

> I can remember being four and thinking I was just one of the guys, that I was just one of the boys. I could never quite understand why I couldn't play with boy toys, or have a boy's bed. Just for example; my best friend who lived across the street at the time we were living in Maryland, and he had this really awesome car

bed. It was a bed made out of a car, and I wanted that bed so bad. Nope. No.

Can't have it.

was his parents' response. Not an isolated event, Houston also recollected other

demurrals:

Well, can I have a boy's bike? No, you cannot have a boy's bike either. Well,

can I play with Hot Wheels? No, you can't play with Hot Wheels. Can I play

with Legos? No, you can't play with Legos. Well, why can't I play with them? .

. . Because you are a girl and these are boy's toys.

The discord in the home, which had been festering for ten years, resulted in

Houston, at the age of fourteen, walking the 4o° streets of his Houston neighborhood at 6

a.m., observing through the windows of houses he passed, the dawn of Christmas day.

As he reflected, he could glean from the fleeting images he observed "the adults starting

to wake up, coming downstairs, making that fresh brewed coffee and getting breakfast

ready before the kids jump up." For him though, this Christmas day would consist of

walking around the mostly empty streets for hours, scrounging up a quarter to use a pay

phone and eventually calling a friend to come get him. His friend, partaking of the

holiday, was unable to assist him until later in the day, so in the meantime, Christmas day

for Houston consisted of trying to stay warm in an abandoned apartment he was lucky

enough to find unlocked on the other side of town.

For the next four years, Houston floated from couch to couch, friend to friend,

seeking shelter and relying on the his determination and the charity of others to survive.

His friends were ". . . supportive, but they didn't know about the LGBTQ stuff. I

[Houston] mean they kind of might have thought it. I mean everyone just played me off as a tomboy and that was pretty much how I was referred to . . . as far as how I dressed and what I did. A lot of them really didn't care . . ."

He also "had the support of his church he went to, and not necessarily support as far as being LGBTQ, but just as in support as in having a place to stay, a roof over my head." Houston continued "They knew [LGBTQ identification] but they didn't know most, so I kind of kept it that way because of course the fear of rejection and everything else, and at that time, that is all I had. You know, I literally left my house with the clothes on my back. I was lucky to escape with that."

Houston was able to persevere through challenging freshman and sophomore years in high school and, at the behest of a still supportive older brother ". . . who made sure I damn well didn't [drop out like he did], . . ." buckled down from an academic standpoint, to excel during his junior and senior years to graduate high school with a 3.1 G.P.A. He now lives and works in Houston, is very active in volunteer and advocacy services for the LGBTQ population, and is very politically vigerous regarding equal rights for everyone.

Los Angeles.

Los Angeles is an eighteen-year old Caucasian female by birth that identifies as a Trans man and also queer. Transmen, as previously discussed, are described by Hill and Mays (2013) as ". . . people whose experience is usually that of being assigned female at birth and socialized as such, to determine at some later point that their gender identity is masculine to the extent that they desire to live full-time as a man . . ." (p. 23).

Los Angeles, the only child in a single-parent household, became homeless at the age of fifteen. He had saved up enough money for a one-way plane ticket from his home in Maine to Los Angeles and he simply left. His father's response; no resistance and a succinct "well, we can't stop you."

There was no final destination for him once he landed at LAX other than streets he had never traversed over 3000 miles from all that he knew. There was no shelter awaiting him, no sustenance to be afforded, just unbridled freedom he sought and the uncertainty it can produce.

Why Los Angeles and not New York or Chicago the reader may ask? Los Angeles retorted, "If I am going to be homeless, if I am going to be on the street, I might as well be somewhere I won't die of frostbite or hypothermia." One has to inquire; what could lead such a strikingly pensive young man to undertake such a journey?

Los Angeles remembers growing up "being forced to [portray] such a female stereotype [which] was not working, and just a strong desire to just not be female" The only child in a single-parent family, any discourse was not easily deflected. He states his father, a ". . . very religious, Catholic . . . Christian . . . I am not really sure which one . . . ," plumber by trade, was never physically abusive but was emotionally abusive regarding Los Angeles's desire to transition and be "out" with his identification.

Los Angeles "came out" at the age of fourteen to very little acceptance from both his father and the public school system in which he was enrolled. His father, a strict disciplinarian himself raised in the same small, homogenous environment that at that time was encapsulating Los Angeles, either was unable or unwilling to embrace diversity of

any kind, even when it was in the form of his own son. Los Angeles' sole memories of

any resemblance of advocacy, on the part of his father, stem from issues encountered at

school.

Not surprisingly, Los Angeles was bullied at school. Not necessarily because of

his gender identification, which at that time had not been publically disclosed, but simply

because he was different. Seeking help from school administration yielded no relief. Los

Angeles recounted, "I would get teased for something and would say 'stop it' and the

[administrators] would say 'you said stop it, you are the bully.' They would just

automatically turn the tables and make it that I [Los Angeles]was the one [starting

trouble]. I got suspended from school three or four times for being the victim" but at

least at those times, my father would challenge them, questioning, "you need to tell me,

your suspending my kid for being bullied?"

If not for his peers, many of whom, he stated, he still considers friends today, he

would not have had any support system whatsoever. Los Angeles divulged, ". . . if I

didn't move out, I was going to end up killing myself. It was that bad. I was emotionally

that out of it that I had to make such a drastic change to survive."

Los Angeles spent his first week in California on the street. He recollected, ". . .

it was just difficult, just like begging people to help, just stuff like that. I ended up

staying in a parking lot, which is kind of like around this area [North Hollywood]. It was

just like a park in a really rich neighborhood, which is safer."

What followed was three months at a shelter, and eventually foster care. The goal

of foster care, as explained by Los Angeles, is family reunification. He perceived, as

both a scandal and an intercession, the actuality that every potential familial caregiver was presented an opportunity to take him in and all refused. To be cast aside in such away gave him both the independence to remain in Los Angeles pursuing his self-actualization and the weight of isolation that no one was there to help or care.

Between foster care and group home placements, stability is alien. Every geographical shift resulted in a new school, new class and graduation requirements, and increased disparity between where he was and the goal of graduation. Los Angeles described:

I remember my biggest issue with high school out here was moving so much. Like, when you are in foster care and you are homeless, you're moving, like, you can move tomorrow . . . I could be sitting in a foster home and my social worker could just walk up to the door and be like, "okay, you have a new placement now. Let's move you halfway across LA." You see how big LA is. Like one day I was living in Hollywood, the next day I'm near the airport, the next day I am living like in Pomona, which is completely outside of the metro area. So you're moving high schools so much and then each high school has different, like requirements about what they want from you . . . the classes you are taking at one high school mean absolutely nothing at the next high school.

Due to the inherent frustration, and quite frankly, the diminished priority education can assume when juxtaposed with basic survival, Los Angles even spent some time "dropped out" of school. Priorities are succinctly expressed as he elaborated, ". . . it's more survival. Education is not the top priority when you are homeless. When you are

homeless, your top priority is when am I going to eat next? Where am I going to sleep tonight? Am I even going to eat in the next five days? Those are your priorities."

Once basic needs were satisfied though, Los Angeles certainly shifted his priorities to education. Through a U.S. Department of Labor program titled Job Corps, which allows students to take courses which count for both high school credit and college credit, he was able to attend a ". . . military-style boarding school . . ." and earn both his high school diploma and pursue collegiate studies, which to date have resulted in the completion of the spring semester of his sophomore year in college.

Los Angeles has recently accepted a scholarship to the University of California – Berkeley and as of the writing of this section of my dissertation, is days from moving there. He currently works for a suicide hotline for trans-people and anticipates a graduate degree in social work in his near future.

Armed with both an education and life experience, he is driven to become a social worker within the foster care system. With an eloquence born of trials and tribulations of the harshest nature, Los Angeles understands ". . . you have to understand what someone's going through in order to help them."

New York.

New York is a Hispanic female in her very early-20's. She identifies as a gay female, or lesbian. The term lesbian ". . . is an identity term used to refer to females who have emotional, romantic, or sexual attractions to members of the same sex . . ." (Durso, 2012, p. 15).

The oldest sibling, by four years, in a two child, single parent home, she began to define who she was at the age of eight. She described:

> Growing up, I kind of always had an interest in women. And then, you know, when I started hanging out with new people and being allowed to start going out with female friends or whatever . . . it just kind of happened and I made the mistake of telling my mom, you know, I think this is what I am feeling, and it did not go very well.

New York, after as she recounts making the mistake of telling her mother how she felt, was subjected to what she would *not* consider "conversion therapy" in the strictest definition of the term, but was nonetheless years of multiple "counseling sessions" every week through her church. These "sessions" lasted until the age of fourteen and the family moved from the Houston area to San Antonio.

Once in San Antonio, the strife ladened relationship between mother and child reached a breaking point after approximately one year. As New York described it:

> She [mom] was basically like "if you're going to continue to live this lifestyle and identify this way, then I can't have you as a daughter." You know, I [New York] was always very open about who I was and that was always really important to me . . . to express who I identified [as] and my mother was very . . ." we can't have people knowing that you're like this. You need to go to church more."

This exchange unfortunately ended with her mother declaring ". . . if you are not going to adapt and you are not going to make these changes in your life, then I am not going to support you."

New York was now homeless. She stayed with a friend the first few nights as her mother reconciled with the ultimatum she herself had proclaimed, and the eventual prophetic result; even filing a missing person report and denying kicking her daughter out to the police when questioned, but to no avail. New York remained homeless, couch surfing and staying with any friends willing to assist her until she was at least able to turn sixteen and get a job.

Once she could legally worked, she did. The money she earned helped buy her lodging with friends and other necessities and her newly found independence seemed to bridge the disconnect between her and her mother, at least to the point that New York moved back in with her mother after a relocation back to Houston. Unfortunately, the respite was short lived and the strife returned, culminating with New York leaving home for the last time at the age of sixteen, this time of her own accord.

Longing for stability, New York enlisted in the U.S. Army at the age of sixteen and was granted admission at the age of seventeen. As she recounts, "I joined the military because they were going to pay for my housing, pay for my food, pay for my school . . . it was kind of like the one way fast track out of here." Retrospectively, New York professed, "I truly and honestly believe that the military saved my life." For the six months between enlistment, and active duty, she again depended upon friends for lodging and states that, regarding the military, "if I needed something, they would . . . help me out as best they could."

In the mean time, due to alternative educational opportunities within her public school, she was able to take classes, at her own speed, online. She graduated with what

she refers to as "the minimum requirements for a diploma" a year and a half early and went into the armed forces as a high school graduate.

No longer in the military, discharged after a year and a half due to medical issues surrounding an injury, she is happily married and working in a detention center / group home for adolescents as an art teacher and occasional overnight chaperone. Her goals include becoming a life coach, working with adolescents who experience substance abuse, legal troubles, etc.

Her ultimate aspiration is to open up a children's home, specifically for LGBQT youth. Given the challenges she has faced and conquered, the epitome of perseverance she presents, and a sense of integrity you cannot escape perceiving when you speak with her, one would be hard pressed to discount her achieving whatever she desires for her future.

Analysis of Data – The Emergence of Common Themes

Through an analysis of these three case-studies, five common themes emerged which may direct those seeking to create interventions to decrease the predisposition youth who identity as a sexual-minority have to becoming homeless.

Theme one – Single parent homes.

All three participants were raised in *basically* single parent homes. The modifier *basically* is being used because one of the participants; Los Angeles, did have a mother with whom he had contact; but due to mental health issues, she did not reside in the home and her parental impact could be described as marginal to none. Los Angeles reinforced,

"I actually grew up with my dad but I visited my mom. My mom has, like, mental health issues so she was never really in my life."

Houston was primarily raised by his mother. His father left the home when Houston was around twelve years old. Having not been supportive of Houston's desire to play with opposite gender aligned toys such as Hot Wheels and Lego's, his removal from the home did not eradicate a support system by any means, but it did leave his mother as the only caregiver as he moved into adolescence.

New York was raised by her mother. She stated, "My biological father isn't really in the picture at all." It should be noted that early on in her childhood, an extended family unit was most certainly recognized as she recalled:

> My mom had me when she was fifteen going on sixteen . . . [and] my mom grew
> up in a family of twelve . . . a long line of migrant workers . . . they were working
> in the fields and things like that. That continued even after she had me [so] she
> kind of passed me off, but she was really young. She was kind of the middle
> child, so she was kind of stuck taking care of all of the younger ones, doing the
> laundry . . . cooking, cleaning, all of that stuff. She was responsible for managing
> the household because the siblings who were older than her were out in the fields.

 However, this dynamic dissipated as New York aged and the family shifted away from seasonal migrant occupations.

Theme two – Influence of family religion.

Family religion was a common theme among the three case studies, both in the vehemently literal interpretations and practices of the parents and the eventual

ambivalence of the participants. Religion, i.e. the "church" had *mixed* implications for the participants during their respective childhoods.

For Houston, church, in the form of "devout, Baptist Christians," impacted his mother's harsh, unaccepting view of gender diversity, possibly attributing to the eventuality of his homelessness, but also assisted him when he was homeless through accessible shelter, food, and other resources. This aid was possibly presented without full disclosure on the part of Houston regarding his gender identification but none the less there is a very real possibility that an almost "don't ask, don't tell" mentality and rationalization was in play.

For Los Angeles, religion in the form of "Catholic, Christian, I am not really sure which one . . . very religious, very transphobic, very homophobic, very conservative" most certainly impacted his father's ability to embrace his son and his heterogeneity. In fact, it was Los Angeles' research on the Internet, involving organized religion and its' reconciliation with his own beliefs, that possibly began the tension in the home that led to his homelessness. He disclosed that "that was probably when the tension in my house started, like when I started refusing to wear a dress to church or when I just started refusing to go altogether." Even now, Los Angeles proclaims, "I don't really identify with any religion. I am just kind of distant from it."

New York's childhood was most certainly influenced by religion. Her mother is currently Roman Catholic but was raised in a Jehovah's Witness family. She describes her religious experience as a child as "every Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday. Sometimes additionally Friday nights" regarding mandatory church attendance.

Once she "came out" to her mother, the interactions with the church were more frequent; "my mother was like, 'you need to go to church more.' Every single day I was going to church . . . my counseling sessions were with these nuns and it was, like, an every other day thing."

When asked if she felt religion had a large influence on her mother's beliefs and behaviors, New York responded "absolutely." Today, possibly due to the compulsory aspect of religion throughout her childhood, and most certainly the antagonistic posture it presented with regards to "conversion" ambitions, New York, when asked if she is religious now responded, "no, I'm not."

Theme three – Influence of parental workplace.

The impact of parental workplace was evident in Houston's account. His mother was a nurse during the 80's and the emergence of the AIDS crisis. It was a time of fear, confusion, and misinformation that one could argue manifested a homophobia that transcended all non-normative gender/sexual identifications and orientations. Houston attributes some of his mother's inability to accept him as simply his mother's denial that he was different due to fear and misunderstanding reflected in the medical field at the time regarding gender and sexual exploration. It could perhaps be compared to an emergency room physician not wanting her/is child to have a motorcycle because s/he sees so many motorcycle accident victims in the emergency room. Influences of the parental workplace for Los Angeles and New York seem more abstract but non the less impactful.

Los Angeles, as previously stated, was raised by his father. He did have somewhat of a peripheral relationship with his mother but she did not reside in the family home due to illness and he chronicles that she was of little influence. A plumber by trade, it would seem that any workplace influences would be sporadic and superficial due to the solitary and transient nature of the work. In this case, it may well be the lack of outside influences which affected his father's preconceived notions and beliefs regarding gender identification / sexual orientation but offering no alternatives. This dynamic may also be in play with regards to New York's mother.

New York's mother ". . . came from a line of migrant workers." Her primary charge during the childrearing years was to take care of all of the children in the family unit. Growing up in a family of twelve, and as the middle child, ". . . she was kind of stuck taking care of all of the younger ones, doing all of the laundry, you know, cooking, cleaning, all of that kind of stuff. She was responsible for managing the household because the siblings who were older than her were out in the fields."

New York believes this position within the family unit resulted in her mother ". . . kind of got [getting] stuck behind . . . She really couldn't go to school and things like that." In similar fashion to Los Angeles' father, it is perhaps the reinforcement of existing beliefs and the absence of alternative perceptions which may have been most influential, from a parental workplace aspect in the ideology of New York's mother.

Theme four – Impact of public schools.

Houston described that he stayed in the same school system from before he was homeless until graduation. He reflected that he wanted to drop out during his freshman

year, but support from his brother, perhaps more accurately reflected as a threat of bodily harm, prevented him from doing so. Even though he remained enrolled, the first two years after leaving home, his performance was poor. He realized after his sophomore year that the 1.96 G.P.A. was unlikely to afford him any post-high school opportunities so he ". . . kind of snapped to it." He recollects, "I busted my ass my junior and senior year and I did, I graduated with like a 3.1, 3.2 G.P.A."

From an intervention standpoint, Houston's public school experience did not include acknowledgement or strategies regarding gender identification / sexual orientation, or for that fact, homelessness. If anything, he was likely regarded only as an at-risk student and if not for the support of his church, completion would have been unlikely.

Los Angeles' public school experience was vastly different. While still living at home in Maine, he was bullied, and classified as an instigator instead of the victim. He described, ". . . my hair was short and I was a girl at the time, so everyone was kind of like 'you're different, you're weird.' They just bullied me almost to death because of that. I mean I had so much trauma with public school [that] I just didn't even want to deal with it out [in L.A.] . . ."

Once in California and in foster care, he was forced to attend initially Hollywood High School and then many others as his housing placements and geographical locations remained constantly in flux. Out of frustration over the varied course requirements, changing environments and a perception of being unable to remain afloat, much less make progress towards completion; he dropped out in the fall of 2016.

Resigned to pursuing a GED once he turned eighteen, Los Angeles' fortune was revised when a social worker suggested a federal program titled Job Corps. This program provided housing, sustenance, and educational opportunities including dual-credit, accelerated completion courses which provided Los Angeles with a springboard to where he is now; days from attending the University of California – Berkeley on scholarship.

New York stated that her school "kind of understood my situation with my family" and because of that she was able to utilize, what she referred to as an accelerated pace, on-line curriculum within her school district that enabled her to complete courses at her own pace and actually graduate a year and a half early. This enabled her to join the U.S. military at the age of seventeen.

Her school offered her some other support mechanisms as well. Her guidance counselor offered some information on private resources such as The Pride Center in San Antonio and The Montrose Center in Houston. Unfortunately those were always some distance away from where she was living at the time and with no local resources in the small residential area in which she lived, were not as impactful as one would hope. There were some student groups at her high school such as an LGBT group and a depression/suicidal thought group from which she gleaned some support, which perhaps made her high school experience less isolated than some others.

Theme five – Positive support systems.

One positive support system for Houston was his older brother. Although he left the family home at fifteen, he remained a fixture in his life. His most notable

contribution was likely that he prevented Houston from following in his footsteps and dropping out of high school.

Another positive support system for Houston was his family church. Although his mother also still attended that church, he rarely if ever had any contact with her in that arena. He states, "I had support of the church, and not necessarily the support as far as being LGBTQ, but just as in support as in having a place to stay, having a roof over my head." He elaborated "They knew, but they didn't know most, so I kind of kept it that way because of course the fear of rejection and everything else, and at that time that was all I had. You know, I literally left my house with the clothes on my back. I was lucky to escape with that."

Of course, Houston also had his peers. Although not necessarily aware of his gender identification / sexual orientation, they were supportive from a friend who was homeless and at times needed a place to stay standpoint. The Internet, and the world it exposed to everyone upon its propagation eventually became a resource and support system of sorts for Houston, but its influence during his childhood and adolescence was minimal compared to both Los Angeles and New York.

Los Angeles believes his most crucial support system came via the Internet and information/communication technology; an online support organization named Trans Lifeline. During December of 2014, and at the age of fifteen, Los Angeles began volunteering for them answering phones for their crisis hotline. After about four months, he states, they realized he was only fifteen and prohibited him from answering calls. He was allowed to perform volunteer work on their social media pages and became as he

describes himself, "an activist." He reports that he remained very close to the founders

and other staff, and that just this year he was hired as a *paid* employee. He will be able to

continue working for them after his move to Berkeley. To this day, he credits the

founders of Trans Lifeline as role models for his journey.

They were not the only ones though. He credits ". . . older trans people, like just

being alive and just being visible . . . ," as well as trans-support groups online and

embedded within Facebook as pivotal influences and supports. It was not until his move

to LA that he actually met a person face-to-face that belonged to the LGBT community.

It is clear that without the expansion of environmental scope afforded by the Internet, Los

Angeles, and possible many others, who identify or orient in *non-normative* ways would

feel even more vulnerable and alone.

New York's primary support system was also derived online. Although she

adamantly asserts, "I truly believe that the military saved my life . . . ," her service came

during the time of don't ask, don't tell, so it was the "friendships online" that she forged

towards the end of her service and beyond that afforded her the most support. She even

met her future husband online during the last weeks of her service, which is how she

eventually ended up living in New York State.

Summary

In a review of the thematic similarities and differences between the three

participants of the study, some glaring similarities as well as some significant differences

come to light. Religion, parental workplace, public school, and various positive

influences can all potentially have both a positive and negative affect on the decision of

homeless sexual-minority youth's decision to leave home and external to this study, their existence after leaving the home.

Parental ideology, and resistance to modification or expansion of that ideology, stemming from religious foundation seems paramount to the probability of non-acceptance of non-normative gender identification / sexual orientation in their respective children. This relationship between these elements is striking, suggesting that the higher the fidelity of religious ideology, the more likely the parent will not be accepting or supportive of the non-normative behavior. The tension created by such a dynamic was a factor in all three case studies and in the opinion of the author, was the strongest predictor.

The influence of parental workplace certainly seems to be instrumental in the mind-set of Houston's mother and her ideas regarding gender identification and sexual orientation. A nurse during the mid 80's, the height of fear and misinformation regarding the HIV epidemic, her personal experience with the abstruse syndrome named AIDS as an ER nurse, as well as the media's portrayal of the pandemic, effectively criminalized alternative gender/sexual lifestyles, if not literally, certainly with regards to societal mores. Though not validated in the current day/age, one would be hard pressed, at the time, to condemn her attitudes.

The other two case studies, Los Angeles and New York, seem different but no less impactful in that, there may have been an absence of alternative opinions and attitudes that could be provided by the workplace to the ones internally held by the participant's parents. Both experienced in the 2000's, acceptance, or at least awareness

with some degree of assention, would likely have been present in a workforce outside of the family dynamic. However, with one working in a largely transient, short-term engagement type profession as a plumber, and the other remaining within the familial coterie of migrant workers caring for the young, it is perhaps the lack of alternative thought that has an impact on parental beliefs, acceptance of alternative gender identification / sexual orientation, and ultimately the dynamics of the home which affect the decision of homeless sexual-minority youth's decision to leave home.

The actual impact of public schools on the eventuality of homelessness for these case studies seemed minimal. Although the different schools afforded the participants varying levels of support, none seemed to target the issue of gender identification / sexual orientation or homelessness with any fidelity. The interventions presented seem to focus for the most part on credit attainment and information dispersement. Considering that public education is the one entity that can claim to have association, compulsory at that, with all three participants, both *prior to* and *after* becoming homeless it is disheartening that no stronger protocol or intervention is in place or utilized. It is the belief of the researcher that the absence of such effort has, in effect, an immense impact on the decision of homeless sexual-minority youth's decision to leave home.

The impact of positive support systems for the research participants seems to show the disparity between generations. The oldest of the participants garnered the majority of his positive support from both peers and the church. Nether of these were aware of his non-normative gender identification / sexual orientation but assisted him as a homeless friend/parishioner.

The two younger participants of the so-called Generation Y / Millennial generation, seemed to have garnered the majority of their positive support from Internet based engagement/correspondence. The expansion of their world afforded by the Internet, combined with the freedom to express ones self almost anonymously, gave them information and freedom without constraint, prejudice, or judgment. *Online*, for them, was truly a *lifeline*.

CHAPTER V

Theoretical Relationship

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory – Overview

In an attempt to obtain a greater contextual incorporation regarding the evaluative and interventional aspects of child/adolescent behavior Sheridan and Gutkin (2000) posited a shift from a medical model, in which the source of student difficulties was inherent *within* the child and adopt an ecological approach that interpreted student difficulties as a breakdown between individual student and the contexts in which they function. This type of contextual framework is crucial to understanding complex interactions at play that could result in the decision of sexual-minority youth to leave home.

An expressly appropriate framework for examining a dynamic such as homelessness, Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST) was utilized for this study. Its' appropriateness for this task was bolstered by Neal and Neal (2013) when they declared, "originally proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1979) ecological systems theory (EST) has been widely adopted by developmental psychologist for understanding individuals in context.

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Bronfenbrenner (1986) stated that to understand a child, the environment in which the child lives must be fully examined including the home, school, community, culture, and so on. He created a structure to organize the multiple environments that may influence a child, not just ones including immediacy of presence, which he designates as microsystems, mesosystems, and macrosystems, but also environments/settings in which the child has no physical presence, which he describes as an exosystem and chromosystems, which Bronfenbrenner (1994) describes, "encompasses change or consistency over *time* [emphasis added] not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives" (p. 40).

Thematic Relationships within EST

Microsystemic influences.

The primal structure within EST is the microsystem. Bronfenbrenner (1994) expounded it can be described as:

A pattern of activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations experienced by the developing person in a given face-to-face setting with particular physical, social, and symbolic features that invite, permit, or inhibit engagement in sustained, progressively more complex interaction with, and activity in, the immediate environment. (p. 39)

Examples could include any immediate environment in which the participant is present and *proximal processes*, defined by Bronfenbrenner (1994) as ". . . reciprocal interactions between a . . . human . . . and the persons, objects, and symbols in the

immediate environment" (p. 38) take place. Simple examples of this could include: (a) home, (b) school, and (c) workplace if employed.

Three *established* microsystems are presented as commonalities among the three case studies: (a) home/family, (b) school, and (c) church. One *emergent* microsystem, the Internet, reveals itself within all three studies, but only during one is it present during what I would term the *transitional period* between participant awareness of gender/sexual incertitude and the eventuality of homelessness, therefore it will not be addressed at this time but will be discussed as a macrosystemic influence.

Home/family for all three participants can be described as single parent, minimal sibling diversion, and lower-SES conditions. It is in relation to the fist two common attributes of the home that consideration of the *dyad* is pertinent. Bronfenbrenner (1979) proposed that the *dyad* is the "basic building block of the microsystem" (p. 56). He defined it as the condition ". . . being formed whenever two persons pay attention or participate in one another's activities . . ." (p. 56), and posited, ". . . there are three different functional forms that a dyad may take . . . " (p. 56).

Dyads, according to Bronfenbrenner (1979) can be described as: (a) observational, (b) joint activity, or (c) primary (p. 56). The depth of the interaction as well, as it's affect on child development, is magnified as the type of dyad moves from observational to primary but it is important to consider that interactions/relationships can the form of a single dyad or be a combination of two or more at the same time. As stated, the more complex the dyadic relationship, the more influential it becomes.

I purport that the single-parent/minimal-sibling dynamic in the homes of all three participants resulted in both, limited opportunities for varied dyadic relationships and weaker dyadic structure due to the primary functions of those relationships. In each of the homes, only one caregiver was present at the time of transition to homelessness. The absence of a secondary caregiver increased the magnitude of the dyad present, limited expansion of alternative influences for that caregiver, and likely resulted in interactions at the *observational* level more frequently than at the more desired *primary* level.

The absence of a balance of power transition within the more base level of dyad may also be noteworthy. Bronfenbrenner (1979) advised:

There is evidence to suggest that the optimal situation for learning and development is one in which the balance of power shifts in favor of the developing person, in other words, when the later is given increasing opportunity to exercise control over the situation. (p. 58)

It is clear from the participants' interviews and their respective recollections regarding

their experiences in the home prior to the transition to homelessness, that they did not perceive possession of control. Absence of an influential sibling in the home, in my opinion, only exacerbated the magnitude of the *negative* interactions and limited the presence of alternative dyads, which might have provided more affirmation or support.

Low-socioeconomic status is another commonality within the environments of all three participants. Although it is a pertinent aspect of the home/family microsystem, I

believe its impact as a means of analysis for this research, lies more in its' macrosystemic influences and will discuss it later in this chapter when the macrosystem is addressed.

School for all three participants played at best a minimal role in alleviating impediments to self-actualization. For Houston, school provided an opportunity to be, as he recounts, ". . . persecuted, I was harassed every day at school. I hated school . . . ," although he does remember the impact of some teachers as he recollects "I remember being in junior high, you know, and teachers always took me under their wing."

For Los Angeles, the memories encompass being:

Bullied in school . . . because I was so different. Like my hair was short and I was a girl at the time, so everyone was kind of like, you're different. You're weird. They just bullied me to almost death because of that. I had so much trauma with public school that I just didn't want to deal with it.

New York's experience with public school was somewhat more amicable. She recollects ". . . the school knew my situation, my guidance counselor . . . I was very open with him and . . . he gave me some resources . . . but of course, they were an hour away in Houston." She did have the support of school sponsored peer groups such as an LGBT group and a depression/suicidal group in which to partake but from an administrative standpoint, ". . . they were able to help me with free lunch, but that was about it."

Church, on the other hand, most certainly played an integral part in the experiences of the participants leading up to and even after the decision to leave home. Houston remembers being a part of a ". . . Baptist home [with] devout Christians as parents." He recalls church participation ". . . every Sunday [and] every Wednesday."

He believes that church/religion had a big influence on her lack of acceptance of his identification/orientation but at the same time, he credits the church ". . . not necessarily the support as far as being LGBTQ, but just in as in support as in having a place to stay, having a roof over my head. They knew, but they didn't know most . . . [and] I kept it that way because of course the fear of rejection . . . That is all I had."

From a microsystemic approach, an analysis of all three participants demonstrates very limited examples (i.e. single-parent homes, absence of influential siblings, single churches, and limited school districts) of dyadic opportunities and varied proximal processes. The negative to marginal impacts of these few relationships/interactions likely resulted in an absence of a support system for the participants to which they could draw assistance to remain in the home, as well as limiting the influences for the primary care givers' evolution of ideology.

Mesosystemic influences.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) asserted, a mesosystem ". . . comprises the linkages and processes taking place between two or more settings containing the developing person (e.g., the relations between home and school, school and workplace . . ." (p. 40). I believe the influential aspect of this classification of interaction lies squarely in its' absence.

The participants described very little to no positive cross-organizational interaction between home and school. Los Angeles did chronicle that his father would advocate for him versus the school disciplinary processes as he reported, ". . . my dad would even help with that. He would actually walk into school and be like 'you mean to

tell me that you're suspending my kid for being bullied?'" however little other involvement was described.

The respective school systems / educational entities were impactful for each of the participants, however this assistance was largely reactive and post-transition as opposed to collaborative with the home environment a priori. Houston fondly recalls that some of his teachers in junior high really "took him under their wing," after he became homeless, Los Angeles credits Job Corps and its inclusive framework and flexibility for his educational success and future opportunities towards the end of his foster care placements, and New York was able to participate in alternative, self-paced instruction which allowed her to graduate at seventeen and enlist in the military, preventing at least another year of homelessness.

It could be substantiated that a relationship between church and home also existed at the mesosystemic level. Much like the educational entities a priori inadequacies, the church influences seemed to remain at the microsystem i.e. one-on-one, individual level instead of being elevated to an environment to environment impact. To clarify, the church seemed to have an individual, varied impact on all participants in isolation but not on the home environment. This describes a more superficial relationship and frankly, a lack of awareness or effort on the part of the religious entity to affect positive outcomes. Alternatives to the isolated interactions might include family outreach and counseling sessions.

The failure, in the opinion of the researcher, of proactive systems to foster cross-organizational cooperation regarding these children/students who were obviously at risk

of homelessness, defines the mesosystemic influences in their respective decisions to become homeless. It can be stipulated that these social systems, most poised to assist and impact these families, were absent in their social obligations.

Exosystemic influences.

It has been clarified by Bronfenbrenner (1986) that:

The psychological development of children in the family is affected not only by what happens in the other environments in which children spend their time but also by what occurs in the other settings in which their parents live their lives, especially in a place that children seldom enter – the parents' world of work. Another domain to which children tend to have limited access is the parents' circle of friends and acquaintances – their social network. (p. 723)

Perhaps already the most difficult influences to identify, due to their invisibility in origin to the developing child, exosystemic influences are also potentially the most difficult to combat. Through an exosystemic lens, it is interestingly easy to identify a different derivation of influence for each of the participants. For Houston, it is parent work place, Los Angeles, neighborhood-community context, and for New York, family social networks.

As previously discussed, Houston's mother was a nurse during the AIDS epidemic/hysteria of the 80's. Fear, misinformation, and ignorance present at the HIV/AIDS emergence resulted in a stigma surrounding non-normative gender identification/orientation that was no longer simply grounded in ideological and religious beliefs, but now supported by the *hard science* of the medical community. The *science*

of the epidemic acted as substantiation to previously held subjective opinions regarding non-normative sexual/gender identification to the point of the creation of a social imaginary accepted dictum of its malevolence.

This stigma permeated all of society and, with his mother squarely placed in the nucleus of its origin; there is little doubt that her profession influenced his decision/transition to homelessness.

The exosystemic influences affecting Los Angeles' decision to become homeless seem to reside within the neighborhood-community context. He recalled:

I grew up in Maine, which is very conservative . . . I lived in a town . . . my high school class had 50 people in it. I mean, it's a very small town. Like everyone knows each other. You can't get away with anything. Everyone knows everyone's parents. Everyone is in everyone's business. Like, it's just a completely different culture.

Los Angeles' communities' inability to accept him as he was, even more so than his father's absence of support, combined with his school's failure to protect and support him, was perhaps the most prominent influence in his decision to become homeless. The indirect participation in the formulation of the exosystem results in a dynamic which is likely impossible for the participant to modify. He was simply at its' mercy.

New York, from an exosystem analysis, seems to have been most influenced by family social networks. Her mother "grew up in a family of twelve . . . from a long line of migrant workers." She [the mother] was born in Mexico, and as the middle child, was responsible for taking care of the children while the older children and adults worked the

fields. Many, if not most of the influences on her mother's beliefs were derived from the extended family and very immediate community, i.e. other migrant families working the same fields.

An absence of external influences, outside of the homogeneous group of a Jehovah's Witness and slightly more moderate Roman Catholic family members and small outside social network would understandable present a less than tolerant audience or support group. Moreover, with an absence of alternative or contradictory dialogue, preconceived opinions or stigma regarding sexual-minority orientation would be decidedly antagonistic with little room for acquiescence.

Macrosystemic influences.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) described the macrosystem as:

. . . consist[ing] of the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristics of a given culture or subculture, with particular reference to the belief systems, bodies of knowledge, material resources, customs, life styles, opportunity structures, hazards, and life course options that are embedded in each of these broader systems. (p. 40)

In addition to the chronosystem, which will be discussed momentarily, I believe the macrosystem to be the most influential regarding the influences affecting the decision of homeless sexual-minority youth to leave home, at least in the limited exposure this research has provided. Two instrumental *forces* are pronouncedly apparent within this study: (a) low socioeconomic status and (b) the Internet.

Low socioeconomic status is a glaring commonality among all of three of the participants. Be it a lack of financial resources, a lack of introspection or expansion of ideology afforded by time and means, or simply a focus on more primitive needs such as shelter and sustenance, it is possible that low socioeconomic status prohibits the evolution of ideals which may be present in higher socioeconomic situations. This stifling of growth and perhaps acceptance of ideals foreign, or at least proliferated from the norm, may be present in lower socioeconomic households simply because divergence is not necessary or impactful to their current circumstance. Most certainly, one could discern an emerging pattern between the presence of low socioeconomic status and an *absence* of exposure to norm-challenging doctrine. This limitation of awareness or ideological development, if it exists, would most certainly be of impact when a parent is expected to absorb counter-anticipated norms regarding identification/orientation/behavior of their children.

The Internet . . . As I complete this study, I cannot help but consider that the Internet and everything it encompasses is likely the *most* influential influence regarding the decision of homeless sexual-minority youth's decision to leave home. I do not believe the impact of the Internet and its' inherent expansion of environment and ideals can be possibly overstated.

Houston, the oldest of the participants, described the impact of the Internet, unfortunately subsequent to his formative years and leaving home, as a gateway to information about ". . . what it was to be transgender." Los Angeles, perhaps the most

impacted by the Internet, was influenced from an informational research, support system, and eventually occupational aspect. He recalled:

> My friends are definitely a support system, but I guess the bigger support system I had was my work. I work for Trans Life . . . a suicide hotline that is just for trans people. I started volunteering for them . . . answering their phones for them as a 15 year-old . . .[but] they figured out I was 15 and were like 'this is a big liability issue for us' . . . but I still volunteered for them, like, I ran their social media pages and just kind of helped them.

He still works for Trans Life today and considers the founders to be ". . . like my parents . . ." but "closer."

During his childhood in Maine, Los Angeles relied on Internet and specifically social media for internal insight and external understanding. He recollected:

> I was on Facebook and I would search on Facebook, like, you know, trans support group stuff. I would talk to people online because there were no other trans people in Maine, I felt like. I am sure there are, but I didn't know. It's hard to network like that when everyone's so close knit."

For New York, the influence of the Internet came years after her transition through homelessness. Although it cannot be considered a macrosystemic influence on her becoming homeless, I regard it as a vital resource for her evolution into the person she wanted to be and feel its' impact regarding that impetus warrants discussion.

New York described her support mechanisms prior to and during her enlistment in the military during the *don't ask, don't tell* mores, and how her life changed towards the end of and after her service:

> For a long time I didn't have a lot of support. It came from friends that I had in school. Once I joined the military, it was right around *don't ask, don't tell*, so I really didn't have a lot of support during those times. It was very minimal . . . Once I left the military I created a bunch of friendships online and that's were I really started expressing "You know what? This is who I am and I am going to live my life that way. . . I had spent so many years kind of suppressing those feelings and not really expressing who I was.

> She also recalled, that it was through an online social network, that she met her future husband. This relationship actually beginning as she was hospitalized towards the end of her service for an injury and spent her days online.

The macrosystemic influences of the Internet regarding its expansion of an individual's sphere of knowledge, relationships, and cultural identification beyond the geographical confines to which they are physically constrained, is in my opinion one of the most significant societal shifts I have observed in my lifetime. This cultural *lifeline* allowed the participants to connect with a world of acceptance and appreciation that was unreachable by any other means, and there should be little doubt of its past and continued influence affecting the decision of sexual-minority youth to become homeless, either by simply providing glimpses of a society which accepts them, connections to peer support, or simply gaining understanding of their gender identification/orientation.

Chromosystemic influences.

Later in the evolution of EST, Bronfenbrenner (1994) introduced and described, "A chronosystem encompasses change or consistency over time not only in the characteristics of the person but also of the environment in which that person lives . . ." (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 40). The influence of *time* in this study also cannot be overstated and I believe is represented by two autonomous aspects.

The two aspects of the chromosystemic influences I believe are represented in this study are: (a) the impact of adolescence on the participant, and (b) the dichotomy that existed between the "worlds" of the participants and their respective caregivers. It is noteworthy that all three participants were able to ascertain inconsistencies in how they perceived themselves regarding personal ideology and preferences versus society's portrayal of *normal* gender stereotype at very early ages.

Houston recollected as early as the age of four ". . . wanting to be one of the guys." Los Angeles, when pressed, could not recall a time during his childhood that he was not considered a "tomboy" because of his masculine identification tendencies, and New York actually "came out" when she was ". . . maybe seven or eight." Although self-identification occurred for all three participants at pre-adolescence ages, all three participants remained in the home until the ages of fourteen or fifteen.

It seems notable that culmination of discord in the home occurred at approximately the same age for all three participants; regardless of if the decision to become homeless was voluntary or involuntary. Given the age of the participants at this juncture, one has to wonder whether adolescence was of impact, either in the hormonal

effects on the participants or the behavioral changes of the participants as perceived by the caregivers.

In reflecting on the second facet, the potential dichotomous perception of a shared reality between the participants and the caregivers, I offer this premise. Society, as it is perceived during the nonage of life tends to remain as a foundational component to how we view the society and the world as we age. A "child" of the 60's may well have a different viewpoint regarding casual sex and drug use as an example, than an individual that was raised in the 90's, respective to their shared current society. This contrast is exacerbated if the subject of the variance is emotionally wrought, as is often the case with gender issues.

I posit that the immergence of even *moderate* societal acceptance of sexual-minority lifestyles and the corresponding media acceptance and portrayal, has created an environment that encourages youth to explore and embrace their own personal ideology without gender identification restraints. Unfortunately, this *reality* is in direct conflict with the societal construct of an older generation, who during their formative years, were exposed to a much more conservative ideology regarding gender roles and expectations. The impact of societal norms during the developmental years of a life results in the basis for which all modifications of beliefs arise. An appropriate analogy can be found with the visual representation of a formula.. If one considers the simple equation A+10 = B, you quickly realize that although all contributors are exposed to "10," which in this case represents societal acceptance at this point in time or in Bronfenbrenner's framework, the predominate macrosystem, where a person starts, i.e. societal beliefs during their

developmental years, or "A" is critical to the resulting answer of "B" or their current, chronosystemic influenced, macrosystemic beliefs. It is the postulation of the researcher that the *B*s will never be similar enough to avoid conflict if the *A*s are too contrastive.

I surmise this is exactly what is happening with this generation of homeless, sexual-minority youth. The societal shift regarding the mainstream acceptance of sexual/gender exploration is conflicting with the dominant held beliefs of prior generations, which are seeded in the conservative viewpoints of religious doctrine and the stigmatization of non-normalcy propagated by the AIDS epidemic. This chromosystemic friction intensifies the already contentious association between child and parent typically existent during adolescence and becomes a key influence affecting the decision of homeless sexual-minority youth to leave home.

I believe the participants in this study were exposed to just such an influence. Houston's mother was a working nurse in the 80's so not only raised in the social norms of the 70's but also exposed, firsthand, to the ramifications, fear, and ignorance surrounding the AIDS epidemic of the 80's.

Los Angeles' father, born in the mid to late 70's would have been experiencing the formative years during the 90's as was New York's mother who had her ". . . when she was fifteen going on sixteen . . .", placing her date of birth in the very late 70's, early 80's and mean that she too was a *product* of the 90's.

Rutherford-Morrison (2016) asserted about the cultural climate at that time:

Growing awareness of HIV/AIDS in the 90s influenced sex education and drove home the importance of practicing safe sex. The HIV/AIDS crisis played a major

role in popular culture in the 90s, featuring prominently in Broadway musicals like *Rent*, music (TLC's "Don't Go Chasing Waterfalls" included the lyrics, "His health is fading and he doesn't know why/ Three letters took him to his final resting place"), and films like 1993's *Philadelphia*. In 1994, MTV's *Real World: San Francisco* featured AIDS educator Pedro Zamora as a cast member. His heartbreaking death shortly after the show aired brought home the realities of the disease to many young viewers. (p. 14)

The media presentation of the deleterious effect of casual sex, especially non-normative interactions and relationships, likely resulted in a foundation of an anti-non-normative ideation for the eventual caregivers, which, when faced with juxtaposition of their children's identification/orientation, resulted in conflict. It is a belief of this researcher that this conflict is a prime example of a chromosystemic affect.

CHAPTER VI

Summary, Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Introduction

Chapter VI is divided into five sections: (a) summary, (b) conclusions, (c) implications, (d) recommendations for future research, and (e) recommendations beyond research. The summary of the study examines the prevalent research regarding the occurrence of student homelessness, the deleterious effects of homelessness, and the disproportionate rate of occurrence for homelessness for students of sexual-minority identification/orientation, as well as the research methodology and participant selection strategy utilized.

The conclusions section will recapitulate the findings of the study with regards to commonalities among the participants' influences affecting their becoming homeless. This reiteration will be structured within five identified *themes*.

The implications sections will focus on how this research might impact the public school system and intervention strategies used by the district Homeless Liaison designee. How these strategies correlate to the scope and purpose of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Education Program will also be discussed.

Lastly, the recommendation section will advance the researcher's endorsements for future research regarding the studied phenomenon with particular attention to identified areas of interest. Also included in the recommendation section are recommendations beyond research regarding the public education system and other service providers.

Summary of the Study

Tunaker (2015) identified ". . . young people who identify a LGBT [sexual-minority] are often victims of hate crime, bullying, harassment, violence, oppression, discrimination, and social exclusion . . . [and] in many cases these factors can contribute to alienation from the family home and subsequently result in homelessness" (pp. 241-242). A disproportionate prevalence of this demographic becoming homeless is substantiated by Corliss et al. (2011) as he reported, ". . . a review of research on studies drawn from homeless (i.e. unaccompanied) youth samples found that this population was overrepresented in 17 of 22 studies . . ." (p. 1684). Corliss (2011) discovered:

> Approximately 25% of lesbian/gay, 15% of bisexual, and 3% of exclusively heterosexual Massachusetts public high school students were homeless [and] sexual-minority males and females had an odds of reporting current homelessness that was between 4 and 13 times that of their exclusively heterosexual peers. (p. 1683)

More recently and closer to home, a study conducted by S. Narendorf and D. Maria (2014), through the University of Houston, found that out of 434 homeless youth surveyed in Harris County, Texas, 25% identified as LGBTQ. Given estimates that ". . .

between 1 million and 1.7 million . . ." (Fernandes, 2007, p. 1) youth experience

homelessness every year and that ". . . . a staggering 2.5 million children are now

homeless . . ." (Bassuk et al., 2014, p. 6), over-representation is precariously detrimental.

It has been noted that ". . . children who had experienced homelessness were more

likely to have an emotional, behavioral, or developmental problem, to have received

mental health care, and to have witnessed serious violence . . . than were children that

were never homeless." Gattis (2009) elaborates, "The consequences of homelessness are

dire and often include unemployment, poverty, morbidity, and mortality . . ." (p. 1067).

More impactful than generalization on the effects of homeless are the results Wagner et

al. (2001) observed in their 272-subject study of homeless youth:

> . . . 35% had been beaten up at least once, 47% of the female youth and 37% of
>
> the male youth had been propositioned to sell sex, almost one-third of the female
>
> youth and 13% of the male youth reported being sexually assaulted, 39% had
>
> been robbed, 44% had been threatened with a gun or other weapon, and 30% had
>
> been shot at. (p. 223)

Narendorf and Maria (2014) also provided similar statistics of homeless

victimization in a more recent and local study of homeless youth in Harris County, Texas.

They reported that of their respondents, 29% had traded sex to meet their needs, 31% had

been raped, 31% had been physically abused, 28% had been sexually abused, 55% had

been emotionally abused and, 24% had attempted suicide.

Given the documented pervasiveness of youth homelessness, the

overrepresentation of youth of sexual-minority identification/orientation, and the

deleterious effects of homeless; this study addressed the problem of sexual-minority students becoming homeless. The research question, which drove this study was: What influences affected homeless, sexual-minority students' decision to leave home?

A qualitative, exploratory case study approach was utilized to perform this research. The case study is relevant for exploratory research situations where the research question is in the form of *what*, a goal of the researcher is to ". . . develop pertinent hypothesis and propositions for further inquiry . . ." (Yin, 2014, p. 10) and the researcher does not have control of the behavioral events being observed (Yin, 2014). The research question for this study is: what influences affected homeless, sexual-minority students' decision to leave home? Its focus on the *discovery* of potential influences instead of deeper analysis of *known* influences differentiate the appropriateness of an *exploratory* case study versus an *explanatory* case study (Yin, 2014).

Prior research demonstrates that the case study approach, of which this study will incorporate, has been advocated ". . . for its use with a specific population – the homeless . . ." (Pable, 2013, p. 70). A case study has the ability to focus on a contemporary phenomenon when the boundaries and relationship between context and phenomenon is not clearly evident (Yin, 1994). "The use of case study to probe an area of interest in depth is particularly appropriate . . ." (Noor, 2008, p. 1602). "It is not intended as a study for an entire organization. Rather it is intended to focus on a particular issue, feature, or unit of analysis . . ." (Noor, 2008, p. 1602) and elaborated further by Hancock and

Algozzine (2011) as an ". . . intensive analysis and descriptions of a single unit or system bounded by time and space . . ." (p. 10).

For this research, the case study methodology was advocated for precisely this reason. It is intended to be: (a) an intensive analysis and description of a single unit (the decision making process of sexual-minority students regarding becoming homeless), (b) bounded not by time and space but instead by definition and context.

This study employed a purposeful sampling strategy. Creswell (2007) explains ". . . this means that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for the study because they can purposefully inform and understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study . . ." (p. 125). This strategy was effectuated by solicitation, in the form of a letter of introduction (see Appendix A). It was distributed in and around service facilities for the homeless in the Texarkana, and Houston, Texas area by the researcher, as well as through social media, and personal distribution. The solicitation described the study, the desired participants, and contact information of the researcher. Casual dialog between potential participants to describe the study and determine appropriateness of the candidate as a participant corresponded with the solicitation process.

Three volunteers, over the age of 17, who met the three pronged criteria of: (a) being homeless during there school-aged years, (b) considered themselves to be non-normative regarding sexual orientation during that time, and (c) made the conscious decision to leave home either voluntarily of involuntarily, were interviewed by the researcher to discern commonalities of themes which precipitated the choice to become homeless. These volunteers were chosen to participate by the researcher in a "first come,

first serve" basis, i.e., the first three eligible participants to volunteer were be selected. Informed consents forms (see Appendix B) were given to, and after review, signed by each participant. A three-tiered interview protocol was utilized (see Appendix C).

Tier one of the interview process involved the initial one-on-one interviews with the selected participants in a private and familiar environment. The questions (see Appendix C) were scripted to ensure between-subject reliability. To address validity concerns, once transcribed, the interviews were dispersed back to the participants for review, verification, and modification if warranted.

Tier two questions were developed respective to the individual responses to the level one questions, and the resulting necessitated clarification or elaboration, specifically with regards to the developing *themes* between the experiences of the participants. These were administered either face-to-face, by email, or telephone as preferred by participant. The responses were documented and validated by the participant by a complete review of the final study.

Lastly, tier three questions were used respective to the individual responses to the tier two questions. These were administered in a secure environment of the participant's choosing, most often via email.

All data and related research documents were maintained under locked conditions in the researcher's home. Only the research had direct access to the data and documents. Confidentiality was ensured at all times. Upon completion of the dissertation study, all maintained files were secured for a period of three years and then destroyed per IRB requirements.

As previously stipulated, the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and evaluated for thematic commonalities. The interviews were recorded using two recording instruments simultaneously to ensure redundancy. The recording instruments audio file was uploaded to the researchers personal computer for storage and then uploaded via researcher into a speech recognition software package for transcription from audio to text through the online service Rev.com. The researcher, to identify commonalities between responses, then analyzed the text transcriptions once they were downloaded from Rev.com.

These commonalities were identified and presented, as themes, both superficially as independent phenomenon in Chapter IV and through a theoretical lens of Brofenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory in Chapter V. Five commonalities of experience or *themes* were uncovered and explored: (a) single-parent homes, (b) religion, (c) parental workplace, (d) student educational setting influence, and (e) student support networks.

Conclusions

Prior research, as previously stipulated, illuminates a relationship between non-normative or sexual-minority identification/orientation, and the potentiality of homelessness at percentages much higher than that for sexual-majority youth (Corless et al., 2011; Dunne et al., 2010; Ray, 2006; Wagner et al., 2001). Although precipitating factors influencing the occurrence of homelessness have been investigated; the influences, in my opinion were superficial, with often simply *familial conflict* as a

"primary cause" (Ray, 2006, p. 2) and often merely identified as just a descriptor of the home environment (Gattis, 2009; Kidd, 2007; Ray 2006).

This research attempted to address those influences, such as familial conflict, at a more comprehensive layer, by illuminating what environmental impacts led to the conflict. Once these influences are identified, strategies can be incorporated to diminish their affects on the conflict in the home and the resulting culmination of homelessness.

In this evaluation of the influences that affected the decision of these homeless sexual-minority youth to leave home, the most influential facet seems to be, within the framework of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory, the *macrosystem*. It should be clearly articulated though, that the *chronosystem* also seemed very instrumental.

Macrosystemic influences that led to the decision of homeless sexual-minority youth to leave home evolve around a scope of awareness, insight, or beliefs. Be it the low-socioeconomic aspect or the influences of the Internet on the key participants of the dyads, the divergence between the ideology held by the respective caregivers and the participants ultimately led to conflict which was not correctly identified, addressed, or remediated in a fashion which enabled the participants to remain in the home. The macrosystemic influence is, in the opinion of the researcher, the vehicle of transference of the societal influences, as they relate to the individual's societal norms, or macrosystem within Bronfenbrenner's EST, during their formative years. The disparity between macrosystemic norms dependent upon the era in which you were raised constitutes the chromosystemic effect.

It is the belief of the researcher that a chromosystemic facet of societal evolution over the last decade has exacerbated this macrosystemic divide. As society, at least as it is represented by media, has become not just simply more tolerant of traditionally non-normative identification/orientation, but transmogrifying embracive of it, a generational split has ensued.

The older generations, less connected and influenced by the more recent media propagation of the normalcy of normative questioning and expansion, remain in a status quo of traditional beliefs and opinions regarding appropriate identification and expression of gender identification and sexual orientation, simply a continued reflection of their times. The younger generation, not constrained by the same ideals, is more open to the expansion of gender/sexual norms, and has difficulty identifying or understanding the impetus behind the more orthodox stance promoted by the older generation.

The divergence between these two constructs contributes to the conflict in the home environment that, for all three of the participants, resulted in the decision, either voluntarily or involuntarily for them to leave home. Understanding the breach between caregiver and child, and the veiled nature of the influences: exosystemic, macrosystemic and chromosystemic; remediation external of the primary dyad is warranted and I believe may be fruitful. No entity is better positioned to absorb this task than the public school system, which is a pivotal foundation relating to the implications of this study.

Implications of the Study

The identification of thematic commonalities regarding the influences affecting the decision of homeless sexual-minority youth to leave home, as well as the analysis of

these commonalities through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) Ecological Systems Theory, should garner insight into potential intervention strategies to mitigate the occurrence of youth homelessness within the sexual-minority population. This knowledge is of benefit to school administrators, educational researchers, social work researchers and professionals, as well as parents and primary caregivers. Effectively, any individual or organization with microsystemic, exosystemic, or macrosystemic influence, should be able to utilize the propositions of this research to advance their respective ambitions.

Public school administrators, specifically the designated district *homeless liaisons*, should recognize the strengths and weaknesses among the processes and interactions of at-risk youth with their environmental and ecological influences, and create interventions accordingly. As one of the few social service entities positioned to have compulsory contact with this population, failure to accept responsibility and provide meaningful assistance would be a moral impropriety and should be considered an ethical violation of our oath to educate.

As EST demonstrates, the at-risk participants may need not even be directly involved in the intervention for it to be successful, as an exosystemic influence. School districts, spearheaded by the designated homeless liaisons, should create a protocol for intervention regarding sexual-minority students at risk for homelessness.

School districts are already versed in identifying two of the precipitating factors for at-risk for homelessness such as low-SES and single parent homes. If you were to include sexual-minority identification/orientation to what we already assess, you would

have an initial blueprint for identifying those perhaps most at risk of homelessness and provide remedial interventions.

The creation of appropriate interventions will likely necessitate expertise in the social sciences such as Psychology, Sociology, and Social Work, thus substantiating the need for the divide between social science research and educational research to be bridged, providing increased visibility of the social phenomenon of sexual-minority student homelessness and assist educators in the development of appropriate strategies.

Educational and social science researchers should both utilize this research as a springboard for visibility of the problem of youth homelessness in our society. Through the course of this study, most if not almost all of the prior research was performed by social scientist and reported in journals of psychology, sociology, or social work. Very little research in this area seems to have been performed by educational researchers and thus, educational professionals, reading educational journals, are grossly unaware of the problem. The educational sector's ability to disperse information to the public through parental contact, local social service organizations and the media, vastly eclipses the social science's ability to disseminate information in my opinion, and informing school administrators of the problem is a logical first step to fully expose the phenomenon.

Further collaboration to create the strategies needed to combat homelessness for this population a priori would be much more productive and efficient than social work strategies engaged once youth become homeless, and it should be noted, those are only relevant if the population is identified and if they seek services in an area that affords them. The combined compulsory interaction with the population, expansive and

thorough geographic coverage, and information dispersement abilities of the public school district and the psychological and sociological expertise of social researchers within the private and university settings is the very reason why cross-discipline research and multi-organizational cooperation regarding sustainable interventions is not only warranted, but also critically needed to combat this blight.

Recommendations for Future Research

Three elements imbedded within this study provided particularly intriguing suggestions to me of which I believe future research might be impactful:

1. Is there a potential correlation between single-parent households and sexual-minority youth homelessness? Although a plethora research has been performed indicating negative correlations between single-parent homes and SES, and higher SES regarding the prevalence of youth homelessness, it is a curiosity of the researcher of the prevalence of sexual-minority youth homelessness is affected when single versus dual-parent households is considered. It is hypothesized by the researcher that the presence of a second caregiver in the home might provide both expanded perspective and stress mitigation, therefore potentially decreasing volatility in the home and decreasing the potential for sexual-minority youth homelessness. In Bronfenbrenner's terms, this would create a new microsystem, macrosystem, and exosystem, with additional chromosystemic influences into the household, which could increase diversity of thought.

2. What is the impact of the Internet as both a mesosystems and exosystem, as related to the principals of Bronfenbrenner.s EST, regarding child development? Much like the propagation of television across the country during the 60's and 70's, The Internet has

introduced a new mesosystem into the home. However, television, regardless of the vast array of channels now available is for the most part a *push* dynamic. In what I refer to as a *push* relationship, content is pushed to you. The consumer consumes what is provided and the choices are dictated by the provided with almost exclusive access. An example would be that no matter how much a person wanted to watch a fishing program, if the provider does not distribute one at that exact time, the consumer would have to modify his/her desire and consume something else.

I consider the Internet/World Wide Web as a *pull* dynamic. Whatever information the consumer desires to consume at just about any given time can be solicited. This creates ability for the consumer to control and focus its exposure exclusively to topics he/she desires.

I believe this shift impacts child development in three ways. First, the child, notwithstanding parental and legal controls, can search and explore topics relevant to him or her and most importantly consistent to his/her already established point of view, at will. This expansion of knowledge accessibility burgeons the child's microsystem to include almost exponential influences. Secondly, this same microsystem expansion is available and likely utilized by the caregiver in the family with the same positive and negative connotations. Lastly, these two microsystems may be radically opposing in substance and bias on any given topic. This divergence could result in exosystems influencing the caregiver/child relationship, which seem congruent, but in fact will be perpetually at diametric opposition, without obviously necessitating negotiation the two stakeholders because of the covert nature of the medium.

3. Is there a potential correlation between socioeconomic status (SES) and homelessness? Specifically, it is a curiosity of the researcher if there exist a difference in the proportion of sexual-minority youth when socioeconomic factors are considered. My hypothesis regarding this research is that there is a negative correlation regarding prevalence of homelessness of sexual-minority youth and increased socioeconomic status but that it is possible a modified distribution prevails, similar to the famous *bell curve* in that lower SES correlates to higher homelessness, midpoint SES correlates to lower homelessness and higher SES correlates back towards higher homelessness. At this time, this hypothesis is just that; an educated guess, but I feel that future research would be warranted to clearly define the affect of SES on sexual-minority youth.

Recommendations Beyond Research

Every local educational agency (LEA), as required by Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and both reauthorized by Title X, Part C, of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (National Center, 2008) and strengthened by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (Schaffhauser, 2016) must designate a *homeless liaison*. This position is responsible for ". . . ensuring the identification, school enrollment, attendance, and opportunities for academic success of students in homeless situations . . ." (National Center, 2008, p. 2)

In my experience, the homeless liaison designation has been integrated into the titles and responsibilities of other district personnel who, with other task to perform, perhaps did not perform the obligations of the homeless liaison with fidelity. My recommendations beyond research involve the re-evaluation of this position with regards

to significance, responsibility and authority in our school districts. Many of the *requirements* listed in the McKinney-Vento Act would greatly diminish many of the hardships described by the participants in this study, if they were followed. Los Angeles described the frustration of moving schools so often when initially in foster care. The McKinney-Vento Act requires districts to ". . . keep homeless students in their school of origin, to the extent feasible, unless it is against the parent's or guardian's wishes . . ." (National Center, 2008, p. 1). The Act even requires districts to provide the necessary transportation to do so.

It is possible that as *guardians*, his varied foster parents wanted him to switch schools to ones closer to their respective domiciles, or that no one with the district ever informed Los Angeles or his foster parents of their rights regarding schools of origin. It is even more likely that no one, even in the larger districts of the country, pays as much attention to the responsibilities, rules and in this case, laws that affect homeless youth near as much as standardized test protocols and scores.

My recommendation is to elevate the visibility of the homeless liaison position in our schools. Afford the position the authority to affect change through adherence to current law, advanced research of the phenomenon, and implementation of intervention strategies to decrease its occurrence.

My last recommendation revolves around the need for educational professionals and social science professionals to bridge the divide between the two genres with respect to homelessness. That need is exhaustively detailed in my implications of the study section but it warrants mention in my recommendations as well. The disproportionate

occurrence of homelessness for sexual-minority youth has a societal impetus, not a

physical or biological one. To me, that distinction denotes that it can be alleviated by the

same society, which has created it; but in order for that to happen; the researchers of the

phenomenon, the current interventionist of the phenomenon, and the public education

system must embrace each other's strengths and work together. This phenomenon can be

diminished, but not in isolation.

Concluding Remarks

I believe that every living organism has an innate right to be happy. I cannot

profess to knowing what happiness is for the frog that hangs out by my back door, or for

my dog Kipper, that keeps sneaking onto my recliner, although I can assume that silly

grin he seems to have and an occasional tail wag may be indicative of it.

I do believe that I have a semblance of what happiness is for a human though. I

believe it is predicated on being authentic to yourself and being able to express your

desired persona to others without fear or apprehension. The participants in this study

were not always able to do this, thus leading to a choice to either have a home or pursue

happiness. The goal of this study is to decrease the likelihood that anyone ever has to

make that decision again, and although unrealistic that one person has the ability to

totally alleviate this bane, I hope that this research will provide the reader with the

unvarnished reality of sexual-minority youth predisposition to homelessness and impact

them to help change that dynamic.

From these case studies, I derived intense sadness, anger, and distrust, but most of

all, *hope*. All three participants persevered through obstacles that have broken others, to

prosper as themselves in newly constructed worlds that accept them. The journey took a bravery I will never know and conviction likely reserved for very few. I am in awe of each of them.

I choose to undertake this research to help in some modest way and decrease what I perceive to be an invisible epidemic. In evaluating how to perform this study, I felt that case studies were the best medium in which to do so. As previously described by Stake (1995), the utilization of case study is appropriate when, as researchers, "we are interested in them [the cases] for both their uniqueness and commonality, we seek to understand them, and we would like to *hear* [emphasis added] their stories"(p. 1).

I too wanted to *hear* their stories… but more importantly, I wanted to *share* their stories with anyone that would listen. As Los Angeles, astutely beyond his years, exclaimed, ". . . you have to understand what someone's going through in order to be able to help them."

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APPENDIX A

Letter of Introduction

Date:

Hello,

      My name is M. Patterson Hill (Patterson) and I am a doctoral student in Educational Leadership at Stephen F. Austin State University. For my dissertation I am examining the influences that attributed to sexual-minority students voluntarily or involuntarily becoming homeless in lieu of remaining in their current housing situation. I am attempting to utilize an exploratory case-study research design to determine common themes present in the self-described events that led up to the respective decisions of volunteer participants, who identified themselves as sexual-minority youths at the time of becoming homeless, to leave home.

      Each participant will be interviewed three times. An initial interview, with previously scripted questions, will be conducted at the location of the participants choosing. The interviews will be recorded and the researcher will take notes. The recording will then be transcribed and the subsequent transcription along with a copy of respective interview notes will be distributed to the participant for review and verification. The second interview, again at a location chosen by the participant, will focus on topics requiring clarification or elaboration from the first interview. The same procedures will follow for the third interviews. The entire process should equate to no more than 5 hours for each participant. **No information will be shared during this study that is not approved by the participant.**

      The specific research question for this study is: **What influences affected homeless, sexual-minority students' decision to leave home.**

      I believe the detection of potential commonalities between participants will provide school administrators with guidance on the creation of interventions designed to mitigate the impact of these factors, decreasing the potentiality of this demographic of student becoming homeless and thus being subjected to the detrimental ramifications inherent within such a circumstance.

      This topic is meaningful to me: (1) as an educator wanting to improve the lives of those we teach, (2) as a human being hoping to alleviate unnecessary pain and suffering of those who are marginalized for no reason other than being different "from the normative" and as (3) someone who is close to a person of sexual-minority orientation who, due to reasons of her own and unsupportive social structures, feels the need to lead a life in the shadows.

Your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated.

I need three volunteers willing to share their story. I can be contacted via email at: mpattersonhill@gmail.com.

Thank you for your consideration,

Patterson

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT

STUDY: A Qualitative Case Study of Self-Reported Influences Affecting the Decision of Sexual-Minority Students to Leave Home.

RESEARCHER: M. Patterson Hill

1. **DESCRIPTION:** You are invited to participate in **a research study** on: What influences affect homeless sexual-minority (LGBQT) students to make the decision to leave home. Participants will be asked to participate in three separate audio-recorded face-to-face interviews, at locations of the participant's choosing, as well give input solicited from the researcher involving the accurate representation of their respective responses to interview questions. Documentation, other than the informed consent, will utilize participant chosen pseudonyms to ensure confidentiality. Informed consent, and any other identifying information, will be maintained in a safe until legal/ethical disposition can occur (three years after date of defense.)

2. **TIME INVOLVEMENT:** Your participation will take approximately 1 hour for each interview (for a total of three hours) as well as additional time as individually needed to review transcriptions of audio recordings and present clarification/modification where desired. The researcher believes that the total time involvement for each participant should be no more than 5 hours.

3. **RISKS AND BENEFITS:** As with any research which involves introspection and exposure of deeply personal experiences and perceptions, there exist a potential for emotional/psychological risk. It is the belief of the researcher that these risk will be minimalized by the voluntary nature of the participation, the familiar environments in which the interviews will be performed, the transparency of the research methods, the inclusion of the participants in triangulational validity measures, and the respect demonstrated by the researcher. The potential benefits of this research to decrease the frequency of sexual-minority students becoming homeless, and being spared the corresponding deleterious effects, outweighs the potential risk in the opinion of the researcher.

4. **PAYMENTS:** The participants selected for this study will receive a $100.00 honorarium for their participation upon completion of the third round of interviews and subsequent participant review of transcription and notes to guarantee accuracy.

5. **PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS:** If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

The alternative is not to participate. You have the right to refuse to answer particular questions. The results of this research study may be presented at scientific or professional meetings or published in scientific journals.

CONTACT INFORMATION:
Questions: If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this research, its procedures, risks and benefits, contact the Primary Researcher, **Patterson Hill** at the following:
Phone: 936-347-7006
Email: mpattersonhill@gmail.com
Mail: P.O. Box 69, Tenaha, TX 75974

Independent Contact: Any concerns with this research may be addressed to the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Stephen F. Austin State University at 936.468.6606.

Participant Consent

Indicate *Yes* or *No*:
I give consent to participate in this study:
    ___Yes   ___No

Indicate *Yes* or *No*:
I give consent to be audiotaped during this study:
    ___Yes   ___No

Indicate *Yes* or *No*:
I give consent for tapes resulting from this study to be used for transcription to text to be included in this study:
    ___Yes   ___No

The extra copy of this signed and dated consent form is for you to keep.

SIGNATURE _____ DATE _____

Print name of participant _____

APPENDIX C

Three Tiered Interview Protocol for Study

Tier One Interview:

Tier one interviews will begin with introductions between the participant and the researcher. The researcher will explain his role, why the study is being done, and provide a brief summary of his background. Once any questions the participant has have been answered and the participant is comfortable with the process, the interview will begin. The following five questions will then be posed:

1. At what point in life did you determine your sexual orientation?

2. How long after you made the above determination did it take for your parents/caregivers to become aware of your sexual orientation?

3. Was their awareness a result of a conscious revelation on your part or by some other means?

4. How long after your sexual orientation became known to your parents/caregivers did the decision and fruition of you leaving home occur?

5. What influences do you believe affected the final result of your leaving home?

     A. Influences involving you?

     B. Influences involving your parents/caregivers?

     C. Influences involving peers?

     D. Influences involving others?

Tier Two Interview:

Level two interviews will begin with a review of the member check provided to the participant in the interim between level one and two. Based on the analysis of data

collected in the level one interviews, questions will be derived for further investigation or clarification.

Level Three Interview:

As required for he saturation of data, questions will be formulated on analysis of interview responses for level two. Level three interviews will begin with a review of the member check provided in the interim between level two and three. Again, based on the analysis of the data collected in the level two interviews, questions will be derived for further investigation or clarification.

VITA

M. Patterson Hill graduated from El Dorado High School in El Dorado, Arkansas. He attended Southern Arkansas University in Magnolia, Arkansas and received his Bachelor of Science in 1996. He attended Texas A&M University – Texarkana in pursuit of his Master of Science Degree in Business Administration, which was conferred in 1999. His career in education began in 2008 as a special education teacher with Liberty-Eylau Independent School District in Texarkana, Texas. He acquired his principal certification in 2011 and transitioned into educational administration with Mount Enterprise Independent School District as their Business Manager in 2013. He was accepted into the 2014 Doctoral Cohort at Stephen F. Austin State University, where he earned a Doctorate of Education in Educational Leadership in 2017. Currently, he serves as the Business Manager for Garrison Independent School District in Garrison, Texas.

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Style Manual Designation: *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, Sixth Edition*

Typist: M. Patterson Hill