

An uphill hurdle to education: The experiences of housing insecure and homeless
students in a Southern California community college

by

Bert Malasig Bitanga

B.Arch., California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo, 1992
M.Arch., Woodbury University, 2010

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

John E. Roueche Community College Leadership Program
College of Education

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

2026

Abstract

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The trauma-informed care model was the theoretical framework and Tinto's (1993) model of student departure was the conceptual framework used to guide this study. The methodology chosen was generic qualitative research consisting of semistructured interviews with seven housing insecure and homeless students from a southern California community college. The research findings of this study were organized by themes arranged under the study's research questions. The themes included: (a) Traumatic Experiences, (b) Anxiety and Distress, (c) Matriculation Restriction, (d) Delay of Higher Education, and (e) Resiliency. The findings indicated various forms of early childhood experiences, including HIH, presented traumatic and adverse challenges for the study participants before enrolling in a community college. Additionally, participants continued encountering various roadblocks, but others maintained resiliency throughout their matriculation process and college experience.

Keywords: trauma, housing insecurity, homelessness, trauma-informed care, Tinto's model of student departure, resiliency.

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I dedicate this dissertation study to my father, Dremio Bitanga, and departed mother, Erlinda Bitanga, for raising a family in a loving home with God as the leader of our household. My parents emphasized the importance of faith, family, and higher education. They worked diligently to provide their children with every life opportunity. I recall my mother referring to higher education as “the crown,” which no one could ever take away. I understand what you mean now, and your words of wisdom will always be with me. I learned life skills, the meaning of hard work, and empathy from my father, which are appropriate attributes required to pursue careers in Architecture and Higher Education.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

A surge in college enrollment in the last 15 years has provided educational opportunities for millions of increasingly diverse people facing challenges (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD], 2015). At the core of college students' experiences, basic needs insecurity—a combination of food and housing insecurity—exists as “a condition challenging many undergraduates trying to pursue credentials” (Goldrick-Rab et al., 2019, p. 23). A national survey conducted in Fall 2020 by The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice (2021) evaluated the basic needs insecurity of approximately 195,000 students attending 130 community colleges and 72 public and private 4-year colleges and universities across 42 states. The study revealed, although 34% of respondents experienced food insecurity in the last 30 days, housing insecurity was experienced by 48% of respondents, with an additional 14% of respondents experiencing homelessness in the year before the survey. Furthermore, results provided essential data indicating community college students are at a higher risk of experiencing basic needs insecurity than their peers at 4-year institutions. Although these data help understand this problem's pervasiveness, limited research exists on housing insecure students in higher education, particularly among community college students. More importantly, the ways housing insecure and homeless students experience community college remain relatively unknown.

Statement of the Problem

Community college students who experience housing insecurity and homelessness (HIH) have educational interests and professional goals similar to their peers, and they consider postsecondary education a conduit for long-term economic sustainability (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017). Enrolling in a community college over a 4-year institution is appealing for various reasons including (a) open admissions policies, (b) affordable or sometimes free tuition, (c)

availability of general education offerings, (d) availability of technical training, and (e) scheduling options catering to nontraditional students (Dukes, 2013). Additionally, community colleges provide various support services to guide and help students with academic and nonacademic challenges.

Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) suggested a significant number of individuals experience HIH “while preparing for, applying to, and attending postsecondary institutions” (p. 23). Dukes (2013) noted college-bound students experiencing HIH “have struggled through extreme financial hardship; residential and school instability; inadequate living arrangements; and, in the case of unaccompanied youth, lack of adult support and encouragement along the path to college enrollment” (Section 6 Introduction). Additionally, policymakers and practitioners often marginalize students experiencing HIH (Hallett et al., 2015). Therefore, colleges “should intentionally acknowledge that the lived experiences of students often influence how they access education” (Hallett & Freas, 2018, p. 727).

Students who experience HIH also face on-going challenges financing higher education due to the continual rise of costs of tuition and housing. Tuition and fees for in-state students living on campus at public 4-year institutions have been 39% of students’ total budget and 20% of the total budget for public 2-year college students living off-campus (CollegeBoard, 2019). For community college students, housing costs comprise a larger percentage of their expenses compared to their 4-year peers. A study conducted by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in 2015 reported, “Housing accounts for 50% of costs at 4-year institutions and over 65% of costs at community colleges” (Hallett & Freas, 2018, p. 724). Moreover, an unestablished rental history, a lack of a guarantor, or insufficient savings for a security deposit

are challenges that make securing residency difficult for individuals in an HIH situation (Broton & Goldrick-Rab, 2013).

The federal government's limitations on student access to financial aid make securing residency challenging. First-time financial aid recipients often wait 30 days after classes start for funding disbursement and for returning students, institutions can take up to 10 days before the first day of class to disburse federal Title VI aid. HUD (2015) noted these delays in financial disbursement are "particularly difficult for students who live off campus because their landlords likely will require a deposit much earlier. As a result, many students without substantial financial resources struggle to afford housing deposits before the new term" (p. 5).

Community college students who experience HIH struggle financially and are apt to live in poverty. They often resort to substandard living to find a place to sleep. HUD (2015) noted, "living in poverty has a biological impact on the brain that impedes academic success, and it also presents students with difficult logistical hurdles" (p. 2). Meeting basic needs may take significant time and energy away from coursework (Hallett & Freas, 2018). Furthermore, "college students experiencing housing insecurity feel disconnected from their peers in class, which creates a sense of isolation on campus" (Hallett & Freas, 2018, p. 724). Full engagement in the educational process deteriorates because of emotional stress and isolation, eventually contributing to housing insecure and homeless students leaving higher education.

Background of the Problem

HIH are related and used synonymously in this study; however, there are differences between the two terms and knowing the difference provides a boundary describing the situation in which most postsecondary students exist. *Housing insecurity* is a disproportionate relationship between high housing costs and total household income. More specifically, when an individual's

total housing cost exceeds 50% of their total housing income, the person is considered to be experiencing housing insecurity (Beaver, n.d.). The total housing cost for homeowners includes (a) mortgage; (b) property taxes; (c) property insurance, maintenance, and repairs; and (d) utility bills. In comparison, the total housing cost for renters includes: (a) security deposit, (b) rent, (c) utilities, and (d) personal property insurance. Once individuals or families reach the stage of housing insecurity, they may experience moving into substandard housing, living in overcrowded situations, living with subfamilies, constantly moving for economic reasons, or starting a life of homelessness (Jaggi, 2019). Housing insecure and homeless students might be delinquent on rent or house payments, without permanent living arrangements including couch surfing, living in their car, in an abandoned building, in a homeless shelter, or on the streets (Waters-Bailey et al., 2019).

For individuals experiencing HIH, their housing situations are in constant flux. Some people transition between one of the stages of housing insecurity and the mildest category of homelessness, called *hidden homelessness* or “provisionally occupied” in which individuals live in formal dwellings (e.g., friends, family members; Jaggi, 2019) or inadequate living conditions (Obioha, 2022). Members of the hidden homeless population do not always use resources or services that support homelessness, although they could benefit from participating (Jaggi, 2019).

The difficulty of establishing accurate data for the number of individuals affected by the phenomenon has been due to extenuating factors, including the transient characteristics of homelessness and the variation of methodologies used to gather the information (Thompson, 2012). Homeless statistics usually include the number of people who access housing insecurity resources (Jaggi, 2019) and those experiencing “street homelessness” and “shelter homelessness;” therefore, the hidden homeless population and those who face episodic

conditions of being housed and unhoused are often excluded from reports (Obioha, 2022, p. 993). When these individuals are unaccounted for in homelessness statistics, the extent of individuals in HIH situations is statistically underreported, making the scope of the problem difficult to ascertain.

In 1987, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McK-V Act) was enacted by Congress to provide fundamental educational rights and increase access in K–12 education (Hallett & Freas, 2018). The document defined *homelessness* as:

unstable living environments that are not fixed, regular, and adequate, including hotel/motel, homeless/domestic violence shelters, cars, parks/campgrounds, and abandoned buildings. The 2011 revision of the McK-V Act extended the definition to cover couch surfing and living doubled-up. (Hallett & Freas, 2018, p. 726)

Under the McK-V Act’s 2002 education subsection, students experiencing homelessness can continue being enrolled at a school while receiving resources from the district, including (a) transportation, (b) supplies, (c) uniforms, and (d) other basic needs (Hallett & Freas, 2018). Unfortunately, guidelines for the McK-V Act do not extend to postsecondary education.

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015), signed by President Obama, attempted to help college students experiencing HIH. The ESSA allows students in secondary education to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA) form and “have access to college preparation programming” (Hallett & Freas, 2018, p. 726); however, the ESSA failed to define homelessness and provide guidance for supporting HIH students upon college entry (Hallett & Freas, 2018).

Community colleges were not originally designed to include student residential facilities. As of 2023, an overwhelming majority of community colleges have not had student housing

facilities because the majority of students have been living in the local area, attending part time, enrolling in online classes, and living with their parents or other relatives (CollegeRaptor, 2023); however, graduation rates have been higher for students living on campus compared to students living off campus, particularly when campus programs promote the integration of student engagement with learning (HUD, 2015). Additionally, on-campus residency stimulates a sense of community and positively affects peer interactions (HUD, 2015).

HIH has been more prevalent in community colleges, with rates of the phenomenon higher for Black Americans, military veterans, formerly incarcerated individuals, and students who are financially independent of their parents or guardians (Goldrick-Rab, 2019). Additionally, HIH overlaps with most social issues that marginalize students and negatively impact college access, persistence, and completion including “poverty, foster care, and LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and others) discrimination” (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017, p. 8; HUD, 2015, p. 2).

Justice and trauma play a significant role in exploring issues of HIH (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017). Educational institutions often view support for homeless students primarily from a charitable perspective (Aviles de Bradley, 2015) The short-term support charity provides is ineffective for sustainable and significant residency students in an HIH situation (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017). Moreover, charity offerings to individuals or families who experience HIH can elicit a sense of social shame (HUD, 2015). Some college community staff and faculty members ignore addressing HIH issues, regard them as incongruent with the mission, and contend that colleges are not social service agencies (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017). Additionally, some believe that although HIH are significant issues, limited resources prevent consideration from the institution. Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) contended:

If colleges and universities have missions of academic success, attention to housing stability must be included to ensure that students who have the greatest need have access to the education that will assist them in attaining the opportunity to learn, grow, and gain economic stability. (p. 19)

However, research gaps exist, including understanding strategies to help students who experience HIH gain college access and improve persistence rates (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017; Hallett & Freas, 2018).

The following sections include the purpose of the study, research questions, theoretical framework, conceptual framework, and methodology. Additionally, the delimitations and assumptions, significance of the study, definition of terms, and organization of the study are presented.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students before, during, and after admission to a southern California community college. The study aimed to illuminate the experiences that influenced the students' access to higher education and academic persistence.

Research Questions

The research questions (RQs) that guided this study were:

RQ 1. What are the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students at a southern California community college?

RQ 2. In what ways do housing insecurity and homelessness influence college access to a southern California community college?

RQ 3. In what ways do housing insecurity and homelessness influence academic persistence at a southern California community college?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The theoretical and conceptual framework helps focus the scope and set the limitations and direction of the research study (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Grant and Osanloo (2014) noted, a theoretical framework “serves as the guide on which to build and support your study and also provides the structure to define how you will philosophically, epistemologically, methodologically, and analytically approach the dissertation as a whole” (p. 13). A conceptual framework uses a variety of graphics or narrative to describe the significant factors, structure, variables, and any relationship between them (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). The conceptual framework is not merely a display of a series of concepts of a study, but the manner of identifying and constructing the researcher’s theory of knowledge, approaches, validity, scope, and the disparities between justified belief and opinion (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Additionally, the conceptual framework displays the connections between concepts and categories in a subject area or domain (Grant & Osanloo, 2014).

Theoretical Framework

The trauma-informed care (TIC) model served as the theoretical framework for this study. The TIC model is structured for professionals or organizations primarily working with older youth and young adults in self-reliance, workforce, and reentry fields (Hercik, 2016). HHH extends beyond the absence of shelter as the phenomenon deprives individuals and families of basic needs and subjects them to potentially unsafe and unpredictable environments (Hopper et al., 2010). Although experiences of housing insecurity or temporary homelessness can stimulate a range of stress levels for individuals or families, prolonged homelessness can generate

traumatic experiences (Hopper et al., 2010). Hopper et al. (2010) stated, “The impact of traumatic stress often makes it difficult for people experiencing homelessness to cope with innumerable obstacles they face in the process of exiting homelessness, and the victimization associated with repeated episodes of homelessness” (p. 80).

Conceptual Framework

Tinto’s (1993) model of student departure served as the conceptual framework for this study. The model aided to improve understanding of the impending factors contributing to housing insecure and homeless students’ academic, social, and emotional experiences at a community college. There are many reasons why students have issues enrolling and persisting in higher education. Tinto’s (1993) model is described as a longitudinal process explaining that pre-entry attributes, including skills, abilities, family background, and prior educational experiences, can suggest how students will eventually respond to the campus environment (Kerby, 2015). Additionally, understanding students’ dispositions (i.e., intentions and commitments) and integration with other members of the academic and social systems of the institution was necessary to consider when analyzing student persistence (Kerby, 2015).

Alignment Table

The development of a table provided an overview representing the alignment of elements in the study including literature findings, research questions, conceptual framework, and interview questions (see Appendix A). The research questions guided the development of this table.

Methodology

This study used a generic qualitative research design. Percy et al. (2015) noted the focus of generic qualitative research is “outward—on the content of opinions, on the actual-world

experiences and happenings, on the thoughtful description and reflection of historical occurrences in people's past" (p. 78). This methodology was appropriate for understanding the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students at a southern California community college. The researcher conducted semistructured one-on-one interviews to collect data.

Delimitations and Assumptions

This study was delimited to students who self-identified as housing insecure or homeless and who were enrolled in at least one course at the same southern California community college. The study was conducted during the 2022–2023 academic year, and the researcher identified seven housing insecure and homeless students who met the criteria to participate. The study was based on three assumptions. First, there was an assumption participants were forthcoming with their housing status. Second, there was an assumption that the participants provided accurate accounts of their housing insecure and homeless experiences and answered all the interview questions openly and honestly. Third, there was an assumption the sample population studied was representative of the population of housing insecure and homeless students at this southern California community college.

Significance of the Study

This study was conducted to expand the existing literature on students who experience HIH and to provide essential data to assist college administrators, faculty, counselors, and advisors in developing best practices for college access, retention, and persistence of students facing HIH. Additionally, understanding the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students may inform policy and help establish support systems for these underserved and marginalized students.

Definition of Terms

The researcher used the following operational definitions of terms found in this dissertation study.

Couch surfing is a situation classified as a secondary form of homelessness characterized by moving from shelter to shelter, often with friends or acquaintances, staying on a couch, spare bedroom, or mattress on the floor, but having no fixed address (VincentCare, 2019).

Disaffiliation is the absence of social support or detachment from society, community, family, and friends resulting from a long period of isolation (Thompson, 2012).

Hidden homelessness specifically refers to individuals temporarily living with others (i.e., couch surfing) without a guarantee they will be able to stay long-term and without immediate prospects for acquiring permanent housing (Jaggi, 2019). This term often describes people staying with friends or relatives because they lack other housing opportunities. This population is considered “hidden” because they do not access homeless supports and services, despite their need for them. Additionally, their situation fluctuates from being “housed” and “unhoused” episodically often in temporary locations (Obioha, 2022). For this reason, they do not appear in standard homelessness statistics (Jaggi, 2019).

Living doubled-up is an informal term for situations when people share living arrangements, sometimes due to economic hardships or loss of housing (Richard et al., 2022).

Overcrowding is an unsafe condition where there is an excess number of people living in a residence to offset the cost of rent (Beaver, n.d.).

Subfamilies is similar to overcrowding, where two or more families share the rent for the same space (Beaver, n.d.).

Substandard housing is a residence considered to be unlivable due to the lack of proper maintenance and utility services (Beaver, n.d.).

Trauma is an event or circumstance that results in physical, emotional, or life-threatening harm impacting individuals' mental health, physical health, emotional health, and overall well-being (Quinn, 2023).

Summary

Chapter 1 introduced the statement problem, the background of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, and research methodology. Next, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks were described. Finally, the study's delimitations, assumptions, and significance were explained, and the definitions of terms used throughout this study were provided. The organization of the study concludes this chapter.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 provided an introduction and overview of the study. Chapter 2 is the literature review that analyzes the research problem leading to the identified gap in the literature the study was designed to address. Chapter 3 describes the methodology appropriate for the problem. The chapter begins with the purpose of the study and the research questions. Next, the TIC model is presented as the theoretical framework serving as the foundation for this study. Additionally, Tinto's (1993) model of student departure is described as the conceptual framework explaining "how ideas in the study relate to one another within the theoretical framework" (Grant & Osanloo, 2014, p. 17). The alignment of research methodology, theoretical and conceptual frameworks, and research questions is summarized. Chapter 3 describes the research design, instrumentation, study setting, study participants, and explains data collection, data sources, data analysis, study quality, ethical considerations, and research limitations.

Chapter 4 provides demographic descriptions of the participants and provides the study findings. Chapter 5 discusses the findings from the study related to literature and the conceptual framework. Chapter 5 concludes with information regarding implications for scholars and the profession, recommendations for further research, and final remarks.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

This chapter includes the study's literature review and uses a thematic framework (see Appendix B) to provide an analytical overview of the literature pertaining to the study. The review of the literature in this chapter represents relevant peer-reviewed journals, academic books, scholarly articles, and reports that will contribute to the development of this study. Following this introduction, literature on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that will guide this study is presented. Next, the literature on poverty and trauma of individuals explains the foundational impacts on HHH. Information on federal legislation that established rights and support for housing insecure and homeless individuals follows. Additionally, the experience of housing insecure and homeless individuals gaining access to postsecondary education, and their persistence to remain enrolled and return the following semester will be reviewed. The chapter culminates with a summative analysis to expose gaps in the literature to substantiate the focus of this study. The following section provides analysis on Tinto's (1993) model of student departure conceptual framework and trauma-informed care (TIC) theoretical framework.

Tinto's Model of Student Departure Conceptual Framework Overview

Tinto's (1993) model of student departure is believed to be rooted in his collaboration with fellow researcher Cullen in 1973 (Metz, 2005). Their teamwork shaped a model of attrition and persistence consisting of factors including:

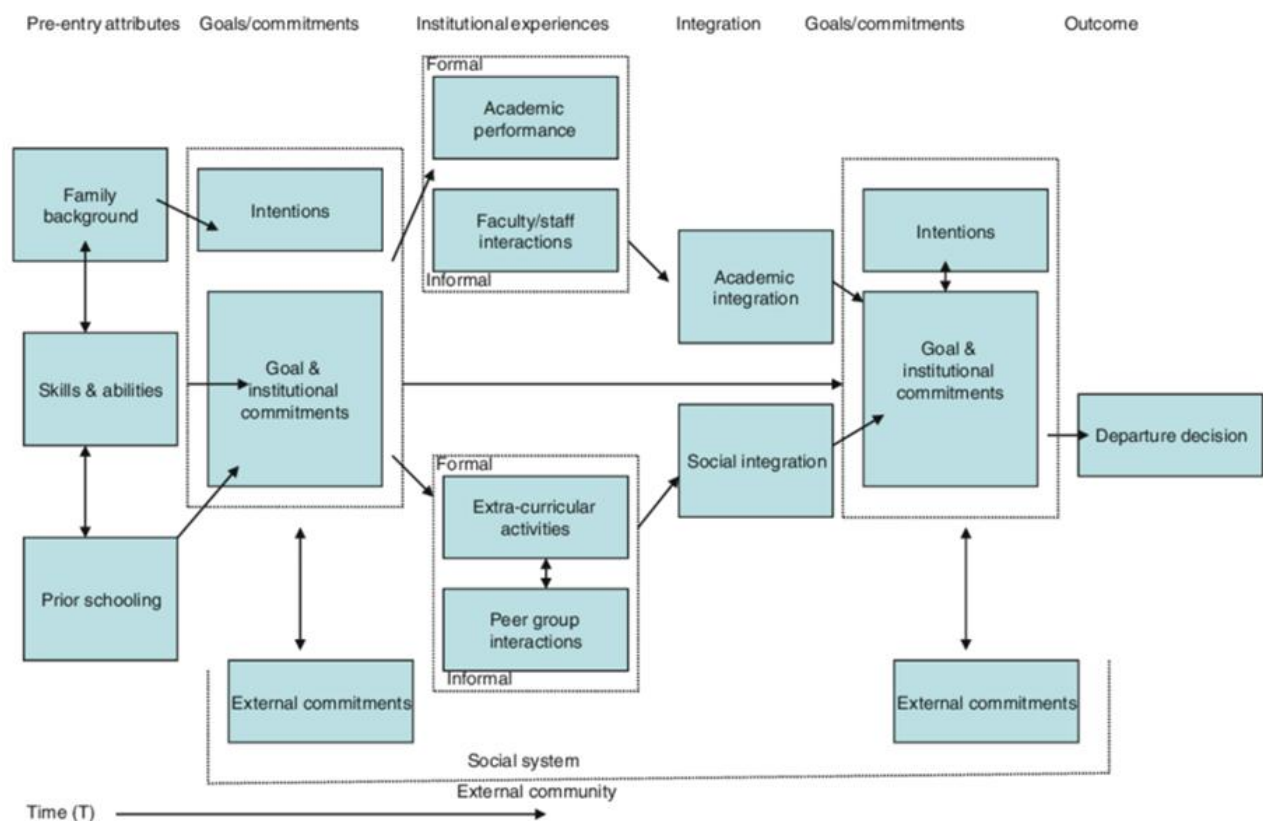
- (a) preentry attributes (prior schooling and family background); (b) goals/commitment (student aspirations and institutional goals); (c) institutional experiences (academics, faculty interaction, cocurricular involvement, and peer group interaction); (d) integration (academic and social); (e) goals/commitment (intentions

and external commitments); and (f) outcome (departure decision—graduate, transfer, dropout). (Metz, 2005, p. 192)

The collaboration formed the foundation for Tinto's (1993) model of student departure (see Figure 2.1) with inclusion of the academic and social integration factors; however, Tinto's version of Van Gennep's (1960) rites of passage theory, including environmental variables was instrumental in directing "the use of ritual and ceremony as necessary components to a person's integration into a new setting" (Metz, 2005, p. 192).

Figure 2.1

Tinto's (1993) Conceptual Model of Student Departure



Note. From "Financial considerations' to 'Poverty': Towards a Reconceptualisation of the Role of Finances in Higher Education Student Drop Out," by M. Breier, 2010. *Higher Education*, 60, p. 657–670 (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-010-9343-5>). Copyright 2010 by Springer Science+Business Media B.V.

A Comparison Study of Ethnic Minority and Majority Noncompleters

In a study conducted in the Netherlands at Erasmus University Rotterdam, researchers used Tinto's (1993) model of student departure as a framework to compare ethnic minority and majority noncompleter students and their reasons for withdrawal from higher vocational education. A survey of 1017 participants inquiring about their rationale for withdrawal was the instrument used for the study. Meeuwisse et al. (2010) noted "an exploratory factor analysis resulted in six factors representing these reasons" (p. 93), including the following:

- Ethnic background of noncompleters was not a factor although interaction affects whether a student drops out or changes course or institution.
- Interaction also affects noncompleters' choice to withdraw early or late during their progress in the program of study.
- The perceived poor quality of education was a factor that yielded more withdrawals of ethnic minority dropouts versus majority dropouts.
- More withdrawals occurred for majority drop-outs due to a lack of ability compared to ethnic minority dropouts.
- Disappointment with the educational content was another factor that affected the ethnic minority students who switched more than the majority students who switched.
- Disappointment with the educational content was less significant to majority noncompleters who withdrew late during their progress in the program of study. This factor was more significant to minority noncompleters who, after more than 1 year, left higher vocational education (Meeuwisse et al., 2010).

Factors Influencing College Persistence for First-Time Students

Tinto's (1993) model of student departure was also used as a framework in a study conducted in Oklahoma at a 4-year public research institution with a student population of over 27,000. Stewart et al. (2015) noted "longitudinal data with 3213 students were analyzed using factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA), Pearson's product-moment correlations, and multiple regression analysis" (p. 12). Specifically, the 3213 participants consisted of 332 freshmen in Fall 2016 who tested into at least one remedial course and 2,881 freshmen in Fall 2006 who tested out of remedial courses. The study examined four factors, including (a) demographic variables, (b) family features, (c) aspects of precollege and college academic performance, and (d) the degree to which compulsory placement in remedial courses predict persistence (Stewart et al., 2015). The results in the study found financial aid and persistence had a strong correlation, especially the standard requirement to sustain a minimum grade point average (GPA) to remain eligible for financial aid, loans, or grant funding (Stewart et al., 2015). Additionally, the study found when financial aid students worked fewer hours, persistence rates increased. Another finding revealed students' GPA in secondary education and the first semester cumulative GPA of postsecondary education combined resulted in a 26% persistence rate (Stewart et al., 2015). Moreover, results from the study described an inverse correlation between secondary education GPA and persistence, where a higher GPA in high school showed a decrease in persistence. This relationship suggests an elevated academic performance in secondary education may not indicate persistence past the first year in the same institution.

Literature Summary

Although Meeuwisse et al. (2010) and Stewart et al. (2015) used Tinto's (1993) model of student departure as a framework, the demographics, purpose, and results of each study were

fundamentally different. The participants in Meeuwisse et al. (2010) were described as ethnic minority and majority noncompleters attending a junior college, and the participants in Stewart et al. (2015) were comprised of first-time, degree-seeking traditional students, enrolled full-time and part-time continuously during the Fall 2006. Whereas the purpose of Stewart et al. (2015) examined the factors that predict persistence between students placed in remedial courses and students who were not, Meeuwisse et al. (2010) aimed to fill the gap by conducting “a comparative study between noncompleters from ethnic minority backgrounds and their majority counterparts” (p. 94). Although ethnicity, precollege performance, and college performance were shared factors on persistence, other findings did not align between the two studies. Academic and social interactions of students or integrating with the culture of the campus were factors in Meeuwisse et al. (2010), but interactions were not examined in Stewart et al. (2015).

A point of interest in Meeuwisse et al. (2010) referred to past studies in which minority students who did not participate in social and academic interactions progressed through their education attributed to positive support from family and community organizations, which was noted to have compensated for the lack of support in school (Stewart et al., 2015). This observation is vital for the study of HIH students and their experience of social integration on campus based on Tinto’s model of student departure. Eligibility to receive financial aid was a factor on persistence in Stewart et al. (2015). In Meeuwisse et al. (2010), the researchers identified financial obligations as referenced to Tinto’s role of external commitment as a significant factor for student departure. Additionally, Meeuwisse et al. (2010) distinguished between students who drop out completely from education and students who withdraw from a program and switched to another.

Trauma-Informed Social Policy: A Conceptual Framework for Policy

Analysis and Advocacy

Trauma is broadly defined as “experiences that produce enduring emotional pain and distress and health outcomes” (Bowen & Murshid, 2016, p. 223). TIC, also known as trauma-to-care, is a service-oriented model spanning a wide range of social service sectors (Bowen & Murshid, 2016). The TIC approach describes the relationship between trauma and the variety of social and well-being issues for which people receive services and treatment focused on addressing an individual’s traumatic experiences (Bowen & Murshid, 2016). TIC initiatives have been explained using a multilayered diagram (Hercik, 2016) and a linear design (Bowen & Murshid, 2016).

Principles of TIC

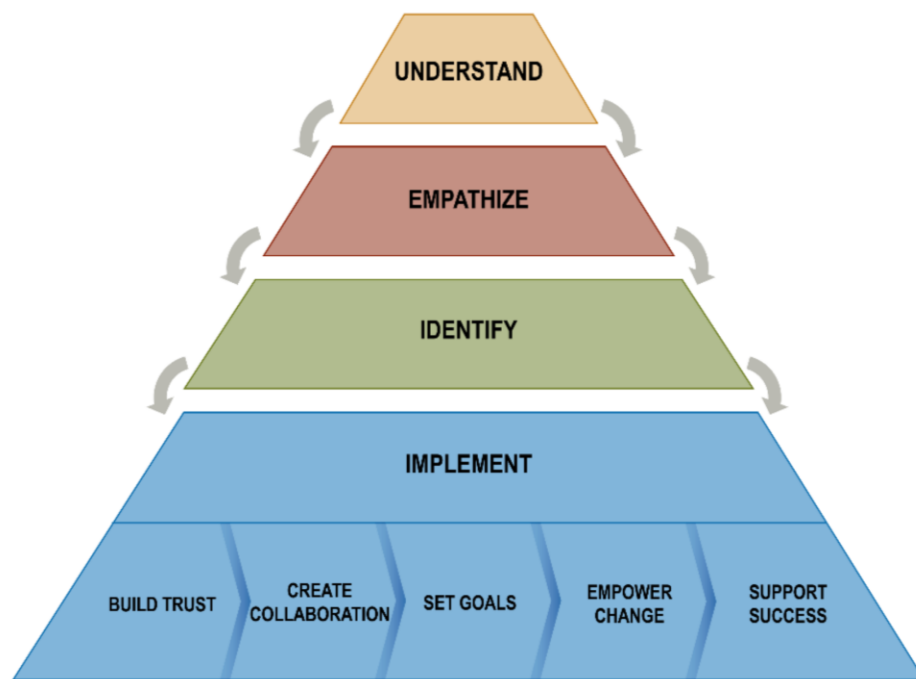
Hercik’s (2016) multitiered approach of TIC is organized in a hierarchical pyramid and emphasizes practicality and versatility for direct practitioners working with adolescents and independent young adults in the workforce and reentry fields. The principles start at the apex with the concept to understand, and descend to empathize, identify, and implement. The base of the pyramid involves building trust, creating collaboration, setting goals, empowering change, and supporting success.

Bowen and Murshid (2016) detailed their linear approach principles including “safety, trustworthiness and transparency, collaboration and peer support, empowerment, choice, and the intersectionality of identity characteristics” (p. 224). Although both strategies share several principles including (a) building trust, (b) creating collaboration, (c) empowering change, and (d) supporting success; the context of each principle differs. The multitiered TIC approach is more specific to service delivery helping youth and youth-serving organizations (Hercik, 2016), and

the linear approach is broader in scope and focusses on social policy (see Figure 2.2; Bowen & Murshid, 2016). However, Bowen and Murshid (2016) recognized a need to converge with a more specific focus and noted “trauma-informed social policy should move beyond broad notions of trauma as a universal experience and address its specific sociopolitical and economic roots as well as its disproportionate impacts among marginalized populations” (p. 224).

Figure 2.2

Trauma-Informed Care Framework



Note. From “Considering a Research-Informed Theoretical Framework for Trauma-Informed Approaches,” by J. Hercik, 2016. *Youth Today*, (<https://youthtoday.org/2016/05/considering-a-research-informed-theoretical-framework-for-trauma-informed-approaches/>). Copyright 2016 by Youth Today.

Literature Summary

The TIC framework can be understood as an organizational change approach in working with individuals. Two models explain TIC: Bowen and Murshid's (2016), a linear structure, and Hercik's (2016), a multitiered design. Although these frameworks are similar with parallel foundations in approaching situations informed by trauma, the principles in each model varied slightly. Bowen and Murshid's (2016) linear model described the principles of TIC as establishing "a meaningful framework for analyzing social policy and guiding advocacy efforts" (p. 223); however, Hercik's (2016) multitiered approach was more specific, described as advocacy efforts aimed to enhance staff understanding, assemble individual and operational capacity, recognize adversity, and execute real practice, policy, and modification in case management.

The Impact of Poverty and Trauma

According to the National Education Association (NEA; 2019), the effect of poverty and trauma on brain development, health, and behavior impedes students from accessing higher-level reasoning and adversely impacts educational achievement. Food deprivation, insecure housing, and traumatic occurrences can trigger students to act out emotions of hostility or run away from extremely stressful situations. Additionally, students experiencing poverty and trauma are susceptible to illness, display erratic behavior, and may have issues with language, recollection, and learning due to "stress hormones that have the potential to harm students' physical health and cognitive development" (NEA, 2019). The following section examines and analyzes the connection between poverty and homelessness, and trauma and homelessness.

Poverty and Homelessness

A study in Australia by Sharam and Hulse (2014) aimed to increase understanding of the relationship between poverty and homelessness with emphasis on families with children was examined. Additionally, a publication by Thompson (2012) was examined, which introduced the interconnections between homelessness, poverty, and unemployment by explaining the predominance of homelessness across the United States and the bases for these rates.

The Relationship Between Poverty and Homelessness

The article titled “Understanding the Nexus Between Poverty and Homelessness” by Sharam and Hulse (2014), aimed to contribute knowledge to research on the connection between homelessness and poverty, specifically referring to experiences of homelessness of families with children in Australia. The article distinguished between the two common descriptions of homelessness as (a) general economic and social structures, including housing market failure, unfavorable labor market conditions, and nonparticipation in state financial aid; and (b) the personal reasons of homelessness, including mental health issues, and substance abuse (Sharam & Hulse, 2014). The groups described as being more susceptible to homelessness include peripheral laborers, those identified for welfare reform, and individuals at risk of homelessness due to any one or a combination of aspects (e.g., personal factors, traits, behaviors); however, Sharam and Hulse (2014) found literature from other countries contradicted the traditional theory of homelessness. They explained families who transition into homelessness, compared to other homeless groups, exhibit less substance abuse and psychological issues, remain homeless for less time, invest in ways to get out of their situation, secure employment, and participate in social behavior. Additionally, Sharam and Hulse (2014) explained the term *critical realist approach to homelessness*, in which the authors theorized poverty is not an essential circumstance for

homelessness because a majority “but not all homeless people are poor but it can be one of a series of casual factors which relate to each other in sometimes complex ways” (p. 295). In other words, this article argued poverty may be construed as the principal influence for homelessness, but there may be other factors. To continue with the theory that poverty is a way of interpreting the experiences of homeless families, Sharam and Hulse (2014) examined two topics of interest, including relational poverty analysis and the Families on the Edge (FoTE) project.

Relational Poverty Analysis Although poverty is discussed in many disciplines, relational poverty analysis (RPA) is derived from an anthropological lens that studies deprivation and inequality. RPA views poverty as the result of “a system of social relationships” (Green, 2009, p. 310) and not merely the effect of “deprivation of income or entitlements” (Sharam & Hulse, 2014, p. 297). Additionally, RPA focusses on the development of destitution in which poverty is not a static situation, but rather more of a dynamic social progression through which individuals acquire, lose, and reacquire access to vital resources and assets, including employment and earnings, personal possessions, and social privileges (Sharam & Hulse, 2014). As noted by Sharam and Hulse (2014), impoverished peoples’ access to assets in Australia was often facilitated by consideration of deservedness and conditionality, which are controversial terms and policies embedded in the welfare system for the benefit of single parents or disabled individuals. Individuation is another essential idea in RPA, which involves a complex situation in which parents or guardians who have been rejected or unsupported by their families, friends, and community are forced by the government to give up custody of their children (Sharam & Hulse, 2014). Individuation occurs when harmful activities are involved, including “violence, coercion, intimidation, harassment, exploitation, humiliation, hostility, cruelty, and vilification” (Sharam & Hulse, 2014, p. 298). Individuation would not occur in events (e.g., a natural disaster)

in which case government support would be provided. Therefore, the RPA concludes destitution—Australia’s equivalent to chronic homelessness—can be determined as the result of a descent in social order in which total assets are relinquished and all social networks and responsibilities are diminished (Sharam & Hulse, 2014).

Families on the Edge Project

The Australian government does not provide direct legislative rights or assistance for homeless people, including homeless shelters. Instead, researchers noted:

Australian federal and state governments fund not-for-profit organizations to provide a network of specialist homelessness services that can offer support, referral and, in some cases, direct access to crisis accommodations and, subsequently, time-limited (12 weeks) ‘transitional’ housing in order to re-establish their lives prior to moving into longer term housing. (Sharam & Hulse, 2014, p. 298)

The rising number of current homeless groups (e.g., single older individuals, youths) are being impacted by the emergence of a new cohort consisting of homeless families with children. The factors that precede single older individuals and youths to a homeless situation are different from the experiences families endure toward homelessness (e.g., financial stress), which leads to housing crisis, or family separation whether domestic violence is involved or not involved (Sharam & Hulse, 2014).

The Family on the Edge (FotE) project was a longitudinal and qualitative study aimed to provide further “understanding of families’ experiences of, and reflections on, periods of homelessness,” which is contrary to past information in Australian literature (Sharam & Hulse, 2014, p. 298). Between 2009 and 2011, the FotE project was conducted in the State of Victoria where 57 homeless families participated in interviews over a period of 12–18 months to provide

information on families' circumstances, adjustments in social relations, responses to their situations, and marginalization. The findings from the FotE project yielded vital information on how participants interpreted and coped with their rights and responsibilities, their communications with family and friends, and their sense of social engagement and integration. The framework of the relational poverty analysis and the main themes from the FotE project served as the emphasis of this peer-reviewed article, which culminated in the detailed review of four topics related to homelessness, including destitution, marginalization, individuation, and resistance.

Destitution: Assets and Impoverishment

Prior to becoming homeless, the family participants in the FotE study were dependent on revenue in the form of government transfers and most disregarded the support. When access to income became available, the opportunity for rental housing was scarce and rental costs increased, which prevented some families from securing stable residency. In essence, the government had not kept pace with the increase in the real estate market and landlords managed to screen out the higher risk tenants in favor of higher-earning individuals (Sharam & Hulse, 2014). Moreover, families who believed having children entitled them to social housing found the process difficult because the government had reduced interest in this sector. Once homeless families learned their options were diminishing, many contacted homeless services to secure emergency lodging; however, they experienced resistance because they were not considered high priority over other homeless groups. Many of the families opted to camp, slept in their cars, looked for free meals, foraged for food, sold their possessions, borrowed money, and in some cases, committed theft. Many family leaders could not find work because of children care needs.

Therefore, some families incurred high interest debt that could not be repaid. Although some families recovered slightly from homelessness, their situation with poverty remained.

Marginalization

The FotE study revealed a high level of predatory and opportunistic violence for long-term single homeless people, including (a) sexual assault, (b) rape, (c) theft, (d) drug related offenses, (e) physical assault, and (f) domestic violence. Additionally, some private landlords displayed milder forms of violence through the eviction process where families were locked out of their apartments without their possessions (Sharam & Hulse, 2014). Other times, the family's possessions were left outside where they were stolen, ransacked, or thrown away (Sharam & Hulse, 2014). Victimized families felt disregarded when explaining the circumstance to the police and some families living in transitional homes refrained from complaining to the landlord due to fear of eviction. Families were vulnerable to constant moving to avoid violence, which caused further instability. Sharam & Hulse (2014) noted "as most of the families comprised of women and children, this part of the process of destitution can be understood as a gendered experience of poverty and homelessness" (p. 303).

Individuation

Relational poverty analysis views socially sanctioned harm to eliminate assets, including family relationships (Sharam & Hulse, 2014). All family participants explained their efforts to maintain livable conditions at home because they were aware of the harsh ramifications of the state intervention child protection agency (Sharam & Hulse, 2014). In most cases, the state rarely involuntary separated family units. Out of the 57 family participants of the FotE study, 14 families voluntarily relinquished their children to ex partners with the hope the other parent would not seek permanent custody, which occurred in some instances. Although separation of

the family can cause trauma, participants shared the rationale to voluntary relinquishing children was a sacrifice that could ultimately preserve the family.

Resistance

According to interview transcripts from the FotE project, participating families revealed the provisions undertaken to stabilize their situation and create conditions that would eliminate the possibility of being homeless again, including “taking on debt, accessing motels and rooming houses, providing items that permitted their children to remain in the mainstream (e.g., computers) and for some, taking up training and education opportunities” (Sharam & Hulse, 2014, p. 305). An essential finding in the FotE project was the strong social identity many families portrayed. The participating families labeled themselves mainstream families to remove the stigma associated with homeless people, and Sharam and Hulse (2014) noted they “claimed entitlement to an asset by appealing to social solidarity” (p. 305).

Homelessness, Poverty, and Unemployment

In Chapter 1 of the book titled *Homelessness, Poverty, and Unemployment: Social Issues and Status*, Thompson (2012) discussed families and youth affected by homelessness, social estrangement and the concepts of disaffiliation, human capital, homeless culture, and psychological dysfunction.

Homeless Families

Thompson (2012) suggested the pervasiveness and increased rate of homelessness throughout the nation can be attributed to the intersection of homelessness, poverty, and unemployment. Thompson described homelessness as “one of the leading social problems in the United States” and further provided several definitions, including the definition widely used in the McKinney-Vento Act (McK-V Act; p. 2). The difficulty of establishing accurate data for the

number of individuals affected by the phenomenon is due to extenuating factors, including the transient characteristics of homelessness and the variation of methodologies used to gather the information (Thompson, 2012). Additionally, Thompson (2012) ascertained families were emerging as a cohort of the homeless population mainly due to the economic repercussions of the Great Recession. A 2009 report by the U.S Conference of Mayors report established “41% of those who were identified as homeless during the annual ‘count of the homeless’ were homeless families,” which “a majority of these families are headed by young (i.e., late 20’s), single/divorced women who have two to three children under the age of five” (Thompson, 2012, p. 3). These families sought shelter in emergency facilities or transitional housing; however, homeless families, more often than single homeless individuals, look for any means to find shelter, “remain homeless for shorter periods of time, and they are less likely to have several episodes of homelessness” (Thompson, 2012, p. 4). The least favorable options for homeless families are situations where they are living in cars, deserted buildings, other uninhabitable places, or on the streets. Thompson (2012) described the factors leading to the homeless situation for families including (a) poverty, (b) lack of affordable housing, and (c) unemployment. Women who have experienced domestic violence, family issues, and involuntary evictions, which have been known to cause deep depression, schizophrenia, substance abuse, and chronic distress, are more susceptible to homelessness (Thompson, 2012).

Homeless Youth

Thompson (2012) provided unofficial data that there were about 500,000 to 2 million homeless/runaway adolescents in the United States in 2009. Thompson (2012) noted “many youth perceive themselves as active agents in the process, choosing to leave undesirable situations for a better life” (p. 5). The situation extends to an individual that is doubly homeless,

which is a term used for an adolescent who is separated from a home by state authorities and then proceeds to run away from the foster care facility (Thompson, 2012). To survive on the streets (e.g., food, housing, financing illegal substances), some common survival decisions for these vulnerable youth included (a) begging for money, (b) prostitution, (c) legal or illegal employment, (d) drug dealing, and € theft. Further consequences lead to dropping out of school, irregular attendance, or failure to complete secondary education, which makes integrating in traditional society more difficult in the future.

Social Estrangement

Thompson (2012) noted “a theoretical model of homelessness was developed decades ago (Bahr & Caplow, 1973; Bahr, 1973) which introduced the notion of social disaffiliation as the most common effect of homelessness” (p. 6). Bahr and Caplow (1973) theorized the effects of being homeless, which they found to be disaffiliation from society, was more essential than the reasons for an individual’s homelessness.

Disaffiliation

The term *disaffiliation* is the absence of social support or detachment from society, community, family, and friends resulting from a long period of isolation (Thompson, 2012). Although homeless men are considered to experience disaffiliation more than other homeless groups, homeless youth are at risk of disaffiliation as evidence of their substandard academic performance, encounters with the police, or seclusion from social interactions (Thompson, 2012). The initial situation of disaffiliation for homeless youth usually occurs in a household where one or both parents abuse substances. The stressful nature of living in an environment with family conflict, mistreatment, and physical abuse further intensifies the situation toward

disaffiliation (Thompson, 2012). Eventually, homelessness and all the factors of disaffiliation intersect, which further marginalizes homeless individuals.

Human Capital

Thompson (2012) defined human capital as the ability to generate products and amenities based on an individual's expertise and knowledge, which is usually determined by educational level, literacy, employability, and earnings. Thompson (2012) noted "appropriate educational attainment can instill in young people an optimistic view of the world, rather than passivity or lack of motivation to seek successful outcomes" (p. 7). Conversely, Thompson (2012) explained the ability, resourcefulness, and adaptability of living on the streets are considered survival skills for homeless individuals and certain actions such as selling drugs or theft can be considered human capital among the homeless although they are nontraditional and illegal.

Homeless Culture

Thompson (2012) indicated the homeless situation people share can create a culture specific to that population. *Acculturation* is the term used to explain the amount of time between leaving a home until a homeless individual becomes acclimated to the street culture. Using only anecdotal evidence, research predicts "youth who spend more than 30 days away from home (Fest, 2003) are likely to shift in this direction" (Thompson, 2012, p. 8). Unfortunately, the survival strategies used during acculturation are usually illegal, which further alienates homeless people from customary community structures (Thompson, 2012).

Psychological Dysfunction

The use of illegal substances in the homeless population is prevalent and a common cause of homelessness. As homeless people continue to use illegal drugs and alcohol to escape the

reality of their situation, the result is usually detrimental involving addiction and separation from normal societal activities (Thompson, 2012).

Thompson (2012) noted to understand life on the street is to experience the emotional affliction and dysfunction of being homeless, which is associated with depression, suicidal thoughts, or suicidal attempts. Additionally, Thompson (2012) indicated “many homeless individuals have limited skills for coping with stress and exhibit various symptoms associated with trauma experiences” (p. 9).

Literature Summary

Sharam and Hulse (2014) and Thompson (2012) provided significant insight on the nexus between poverty and homelessness. The choice to find literature from a country outside the United States was intentional and essential because the researcher was interested to learn how poverty and homelessness are approached from a different lens. Sharam and Hulse (2014) offered information on relational poverty analysis and how the processes regarding poverty and homelessness are controlled in the Australian government, and Thompson (2012) focused more on the concept of social estrangement. A point of interest in Sharam and Hulse (2014) was the Australian system did not provide statutory rights or homeless shelters for homeless people or families, which is contradictory to the U.S. system. Sharam and Hulse (2014) gave the impression the Australian government was more stringent and described the escalating marginalization homeless people have endured in the past few years. Sharam and Hulse (2014) and Thompson (2012) discussed the effects of poverty on homelessness with emphasis on the youth and families, although the Sharam and Hulse (2014) delved deeper into the description of the homeless family with the section describing the FotE Project. Additionally, Sharam and Hulse (2014) introduced the researcher to unique concepts with the descriptors destitution and

individuation. Neither of these terms have been encountered in any other literature on poverty and homelessness. On the other hand, Thompson (2012) offered new terminology with the words disaffiliation, acculturation, and the concept of human capital as it relates to homelessness.

Trauma and Homelessness

The relationship between trauma and homelessness was analyzed in the review of a clinical perspective article titled “Family Homelessness: A Deepening Crisis in Urban Communities” by Biel et al. (2014), which emphasized preventive measures of homelessness through carefully planned strategies. Additionally, the book titled *Homelessness and Housing Insecurity in Higher Education* by Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) was examined.

Family Homelessness: A Deepening Crisis in Urban Communities

Biel et al. (2014) noted trauma is a permeating issue in the United States and affects many homeless people in the different groups; however, homeless single adult women who care for two or more young children are impacted the most with 90% in this group experiencing physical or sexual assault with three times the rate of posttraumatic stress disorder compared to their peers of equal age (Biel et al., 2014). The higher rate of posttraumatic stress disorder is attributed to the fact young women “are still undergoing neurodevelopmental changes of their own and . . . might struggle to buffer the emotional impact of housing instability on their children” (Biel et al., 2014, p. 1248). Additionally, as the head of the household, a young mother is left to work or look for employment, continuing to search for stable housing, trying to eat healthy while worrying about her children’s nutrition, and juggling other needs without support (Biel et al., 2014).

Similarly, developmental and emotional issues are experienced by 80% of youth in homeless families. The ramifications, as noted by Biel et al. (2014), included:

Discontinuous class attendance, learning disabilities, disruptive behavior, depression, and anxiety are common in homeless children, and emotional symptoms can be aggravated by lack of sleep, illness, hunger, exposure to violence, preexisting physical health and mental health problems, substance abuse, and overcrowded living arrangements. (p. 1248)

Consideration of trauma's effect on social functioning, physical health, and emotional well-being is essential for delivery of effective social services and clinical services to distressed families (Biel et al., 2014).

Biel et al. (2014) suggested a review of public policy and preventive measures are ways to approach homelessness intervention, and that suitable housing is only a part of the equation for a comprehensive strategy to help homeless families. External support, including improved resource amenities, robust outreach efforts, and expanded access to mentoring programs, can provide "health care, mental health services, education and job opportunities, childcare, and an environment that promotes empowerment" (Biel et al., 2014, p. 1249).

Trauma-Informed and Sensitive Colleges

Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) introduced the TIC framework as a means of understanding the relationship between trauma and education. The authors adamantly explained trauma is not synonymous with stress and discomfort. Some levels of stress can help with cognitive development, which most individuals can endure (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017). Additionally, human and societal interactions are critical for the development of the brain. Trauma, on the other hand, can be detrimental to the development of the brain and is often misconstrued with the occurrence of an event. Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) explained "trauma emerges when an individual is unable to cope as a result of a stressful experience" (p. 67).

People can have different responses, but for some, trauma can have extensive impacts including feeling depressed, unsafe, isolated, and helpless.

Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) referenced a study by the Center for Youth Wellness (2014) where research on stress and trauma was conducted and three types of stresses emerged: positive, tolerable, and toxic. Temporary and mild situations that help individuals mature and learn are identified as positive stress (e.g., speaking in front of the class, taking a final examination). Tolerable stress can be prompted by a negative and infrequent event with an affiliated support system to help cope through the difficult circumstance such as the death of a parent. Toxic stress is synonymous with trauma, and can be described as a severe, intense, and prolonged reaction to an event that is void of the support necessary to achieve normal emotional stability (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017).

How Trauma Related to Housing Insecurity Influences Education

According to Hallett and Crutchfield (2017), a student's ability to fully engage in the educational process can be negatively impacted by trauma. Living in poverty is a leading factor of persistent HHI, which can be traumatizing especially when a student lacks the support system from family, friends, or community. Additionally, focus, commitment, and a sense of stability are all essential for effective learning, but the inability to meet the basic needs of food and housing disrupts the cognitive process of housing insecure and homeless students. Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) noted, "For example, students may have a difficult time focusing on a class activity when they do not know where they will sleep that night" (p. 69).

Literature Summary

The literature in this section explained the connection between poverty, HHI, trauma, and education. Each publication described trauma, correlating factors, and effects inhibiting the

homeless population with the Biel et al. (2014) on the homeless family and Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) focusing on homeless students. Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) were more specific with defining trauma, although both Biel et al. (2014) and Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) were descriptive of trauma and the effects on the youth. Whereas Biel et al. (2014) emphasized the reform of public policy and advocated for the improvement of support services for the homeless, Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) emphasized the TIC framework to understand strategies to improve educational support for homeless students. Additionally, Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) noted, “Virtually no research has been done at the college level to understand how this framework can be useful in understanding student experiences or to build models of how postsecondary institutions can be trauma sensitive” (p. 65). This statement provided validation for using the TIC theoretical framework for this generic qualitative dissertation study.

Federal Legislation in Education

The predominant legislations that addressed homelessness and education at the time that the data were collected were the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McK-V Act, 2011) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, 2015). Each legislation provided rights, protection, guidance, support, and resources for children and youth age 21 and under who experience homelessness attending elementary through secondary education. The following section examines and provides analysis on the McK-V Act and the ESSA.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The following subsection references a study analyzing the efficacy of the McK-V Act (2011) and the perceptions of homeless youth trying to remain in high school (Ausikaitis et al., 2015). Also included are findings from a study on the experiences of youth, families, and

homeless liaisons to better understand how educational environments can foster resilience among the homeless youth (Clemens et al., 2018).

Staying in School: The Efficacy of the McK-V Act for Homeless Youth

Ausikaitis et al. (2015) examined the purpose of the McK-V Act, its written regulations, and the perspectives of youth living in four homeless shelters on its influence and how the law was authorized in one urban school district. They concluded there was a strong connection between student dropout rates and poverty, which could impede students' opportunities to increase their upward socioeconomic mobility. Moreover, Ausikaitis et al. (2015) recognized the absence of secondary education sustained the cycle and progression of disconnect and marginalization of homeless youth in society. They concluded additional exploration was necessary to learn about the educational experiences of homeless youth who are eligible for services under McK-V Act.

Ausikaitis et al. (2015) conducted an efficacy study using a social justice theoretical framework as a method to direct attention to the fundamental inequality and partiality of society toward members of the majority culture and people in the upper socioeconomic class. A critical qualitative research methodology was used to build an understanding of the challenges facing youth living in three homeless shelters and one transitional housing program experienced with their education. Because these students lived in locations designated for the homeless, they were eligible for support services from the McK-V Act. This study also explored the complex reasons why students failed to access benefits (Ausikaitis et al., 2015). Three focus groups consisting of homeless youth were assembled with two facilitators for two of the groups and one facilitator in the third group. The results of the transcribed and coded focus groups produced themes including, "disclosure issues, lack of awareness of McK-V Act rights, transportation issues,

impact of staff, the negative effects of homelessness, and dropping out of school” (Ausikaitis et al., 2015, p. 714).

Disclosure

Many participants in the study claimed they did not want to reveal their homeless situation to school staff from fear of stigmatization by staff and other students. Many had observed or experienced staff and other students’ judgmental behaviors in the past and chose to keep their housing statuses private. These condescending attitudes drove some participants to not wanting to disclose their homeless situation, which was a requirement to receive the support that the McK-V Act provides; however, participants who disclosed their homeless situation and were determined eligible under the McK-V Act, were granted access to services, financial aid, and assistance with transportation (Ausikaitis et al., 2015).

Awareness of Rights

Most participants interviewed were not aware of their rights under the McK-V Act. They claimed some staff members would periodically provide intermittent support, but information about the benefits available through the McK-V Act were not shared with them. Ausikaitis et al. (2015) noted uninformed students and fear of judgement resulted in students not being able to self-advocate for their entitled rights and caused them to only receive sporadic assistance from school staff.

Transportation

Homeless students move frequently, and to have stability in the school they attend, they will choose to travel distances longer than their counterparts who live in close proximity to their school (Ausikaitis et al., 2015). For this reason, the McK-V Act provided access to transportation to and from school. Many students interviewed claimed their choice to stop attending high

school or a reason for poor attendance was a direct result of lack of transportation. If students disclosed their situation of living in a homeless shelter or temporary housing location, then they would be made aware of their rights to receive transportation assistance. For these participants, attendance would increase although dropout rates would not necessarily decrease (Ausikaitis et al., 2015).

The Impact of Staff

Most participants stated help from faculty and counselors who informed homeless students of the McK-V Act was critical for their success. Conversely, when students' homeless situations were not disclosed, faculty were less empathetic and often reacted punitively when confronting students about trancies or other issues (Ausikaitis et al., 2015).

Effects of Homelessness

Many youth participants explained the difficulties of being homeless without adult support. They described the struggle of occasionally living in the streets alone, exposure to drugs and crime, and living without the basic amenities such as a place to shower or wash clothes. With these extenuating circumstances, some participants stated attending school became an additional burden (Ausikaitis et al., 2015).

Dropping Out

Few homeless participants in these focus groups earned their high school diplomas in the normal 4 years of high school. Some of the individuals who were fortunate to resolve their homeless situations wanted to return to school and earn a diploma. Unfortunately, they were confronted with other hurdles, which they believed made returning to high school impossible (Ausikaitis et al., 2015). Overall, Ausikaitis et al. (2015) attributed the stigma of disclosing one's homeless situation as the primary factor for the homeless youth studied to forego assistance via

the McK-V Act. Many students were unaware of, or had limited awareness of, the support they may have been eligible for had they divulged their status of living in a homeless shelter or transitional housing facility.

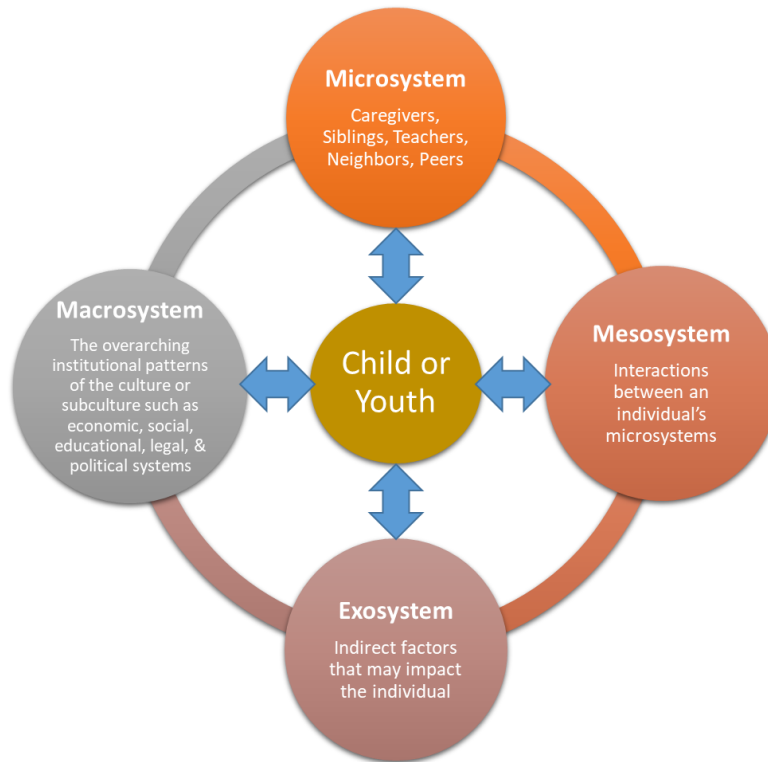
Promoting Resilience in Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Clemens et al. (2018) considered one of the McK-V Act parameters, which states the intent of the federal legislature is “to guide school systems in creating educational environments which promote resiliency and improved academic outcomes for students experiencing homelessness” (p. 106). Resiliency, as defined in Clemens et al. (2018) is “an individual’s capacity to overcome identifiable risk factors (e.g., poverty, homelessness) and to avoid the negative outcomes often associated with these risks” (p. 106). Clemens et al. (2018) examined how supporting resiliency and promoting excellence in education for youth experiencing homelessness can be achieved through the deliberate application of the McK-V Act in school systems.

The theoretical framework that guided this resiliency study was Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model (see Figure 2.3), which is based on the multilayered interaction and magnitude of impact of coexisting systems on the individual that describes the course of human progress (Clemens et al., 2018).

Figure 2.3

Bronfenbrenner's Biological Model



Note. Conceptualization that draws from “Promoting Resilience in Youth Experiencing Homelessness Through Implementation of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act” by E. Clemens, R. S. Hess, M. M. Strear, L. Rue, S. Rizzolo & J. Henninger, 2017. *Preventing School Failure*, 62(2), 105–115. (<https://doi.org/10.1080/1045988X.2017.1387756>).

As shown in Figure 2.3, the ecological environment can be described as four stages, including (a) the microsystem, (b) mesosystem, (c) exosystem, and (d) macrosystem with the child located at the center of the model who interacts simultaneously in the complex system (Clemens et al., 2018). Clemens et al. (2018) noted consensual qualitative research was used in this study because the method “is an inductive, data-driven procedure used to examine the target phenomenon based on participants’ experiences” (p. 108). The targeted stakeholders included

focus groups at a statewide training on homeless education, focus groups from site visits to exemplary districts, and individual interviews with youth and families (Clemens et al., 2018).

Focus Groups at a Statewide Training on Homeless Education

A semistructured protocol was used during meetings lasting 90 minutes for each of the three focus groups assembled from representatives in 24 school districts. The inquiries aimed to learn about “their approaches to implementation such as performance targets, methods of measuring progress, and the relationship between program activities and these measures” (Clemens et al., 2018, p. 108).

Focus Groups From Site Visits to Exemplary Districts

The participants in the focus groups were identified as key frontline staff and stakeholders by site leaders from regional collaborations and exemplary districts. A semistructured protocol was used to confirm data were collected on the proposed and actual execution of the McK-V Act and staff observations of program strengths, weaknesses, and challenges to meeting goals (Clemens et al., 2018).

Individual Interviews

The participants interviewed in this group were all eligible to receive McK-V Act services and included three youth, three mothers, and one family unit consisting of a mother and her children (Clemens et al., 2018). Once again, a semistructured protocol was used during individual interviews with questions about the participants’ initial thoughts on service execution for the McK-V Act services received. The results of the resiliency study yielded four categories, including (a) critical incidents are recognized and acted upon, (b) philosophies of services for educating youth experiencing homelessness, (c) building relationships with families, and (d) community and school collaboration and awareness (Clemens et al., 2018). The researchers

noted the following attitudes toward McK-V Act amenities may help school personnel who want to improve their programming for homeless youth and families:

One essential finding is the need for professional development for all school staff on the meaning of homelessness, the potential signs that a student or family might be experiencing homelessness (e.g., youth wearing same clothes, family providing a home address of a shelter or local hotel with weekly rates), and most importantly, the name and contact information for the district McK-V Act liaison. (Clemens et al., 2018, p. 113)

Existing studies on the lives of homeless youth suggests similarities exist in becoming acclimated to harsh environments and improving the understanding of the complicated concept of resilience (Clemens et al., 2018).

Literature Summary

The literature described the significance of the McK-V Act (2011) for people who experience homelessness but also exposed flaws that limited the intended effectiveness of the federal legislature. Both studies aimed to examine the extent of stakeholders' awareness about the McK-V Act and the services afforded to homeless youth; however, the researchers for the efficacy study (Ausikaitis et al., 2015) interviewed only high school students living in homeless shelters or a transitional housing complex. Because of the theoretical framework guiding the research in the resiliency study, Clemens et al. (2018) include a more comprehensive group of participants including external stakeholders and advocates, homeless youth, homeless female adults, and one homeless family. The efficacy study revealed the consequences of low attendance and dropout rates in an educational district, which was ineffective in assisting most of the homeless students who participated in accessing the services entitled to them by the McK-V Act. Conversely, by approaching the implementation of the McK-V Act holistically and

symbiotically, the service providers in the resiliency study were able to extend services beyond compliance that “may foster an environment that promotes resilience and educational excellence” while continuing to identify areas for improvement (Clemens et al., 2018, p. 114).

Every Student Succeeds Act

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) transformed the K–12 education system in the United States. The ESEA marked the federal government’s responsibility and pledge for students’ equal opportunity and augmentation of federal authority and funding (Malin et al., 2017). In existence for over half a century, ESEA has been reauthorized, notably with the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). More recently, ESEA was reauthorized as the ESSA, signed into law in 2015. The ESSA includes several complex policy constructs involving state, intermediary, and local educators’ activities (Malin et al., 2017).

The literature examined in the following subsection includes a college and career readiness (CCR) study and a policy brief relating to the ESSA enacted under the Obama administration in 2015. The CCR study addressed the call by policy makers to improve students’ CCR as established in the ESSA, and the policy brief reviewed the implementation of revised programs by state policymakers and offered broad and specific recommendations on some of the established issues (Malin et al., 2017).

The ESSA and CCR

One section connected with the ESSA includes extensive policy efforts called CCR aimed to improve the preparation of K–12 students for transition into college and the workforce. As ESEA was instrumental in guiding and influencing state policy and school district procedures, the significance of the changes which ESSA would place on CCR strategy and performance for state and local levels prompted awareness for this study (Malin et al., 2017).

Researchers first examined the extent and means CCR is described in the ESSA and subsequently reviewed and analyzed CCR development in the state of Illinois from 2007 to 2017. Due to the implementation change in which ESSA transfers the authority of distributing benefits to each state legislature, the purpose of this study was to inform policymakers and educational leadership in other states as they reviewed and revised their ESSA annual plans, with particular consideration to equity. Additionally, the study provides notifications and recommendations for state agencies and local districts on executing ESSA CCR provisions (Malin et al., 2017).

The premise of CCR is students' transition to postsecondary education should be augmented by secondary education preparation, especially because "the path from high school graduation and into employment increasingly requires postsecondary credentials" (Malin et al., 2017, p. 811). The college completion goal under the Obama administration proposed 10 million higher education or advanced training graduates by 2020, which did not come close to being achieved (Malin et al., 2017). Additionally, understanding how CCR has been presented and highlighted in ESSA strategy is significant, mainly because public education requires education for every student, including those from traditionally underserved student populations (Malin et al., 2017). Therefore, the study examined the extent equity was integrated in the CCR policy because as Malin et al. (2017) noted "if CCR is not recognized as important for all students, the nation risks perpetuating inequities among student groups that may have a lasting detrimental impact on society" (p. 813).

The CCR study used a critical analytic approach emphasizing equity in the assessment of ESSA and the context of the Illinois CCR policy (Malin et al., 2017). The findings of the CCR study exposed 21 distinct areas where CCR was apparent in the ESSA, and described patterns

associated with equity. Malin et al. (2017) highlighted some of the findings, including Title I, where \$48 million were allotted for “prevention/intervention programs for neglected, delinquent, or at-risk children” (p. 818), and Title III, where \$0.75 billion was “authorized for English learners and immigrant students” (p. 819) in the 2017 fiscal year; however, information specifying gender and designating aspiring first-generation college students was not considered for access and enrollment in advanced coursework in career and technical education, Advanced Placement courses, and International Baccalaureate courses (Malin et al., 2017).

CCR Policy and Programming in Illinois

Legislators in Illinois approved three bills emphasizing CCR policies and programming. Two laws aimed at improving curriculum rigor and increasing student readiness for college. The third law was enacted in 2016 and called the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act, which was enacted in 2016 and provided a firm emphasis on CCR (Malin et al., 2017).

Changes made to the Public Community College Act (1961) prompted the Illinois College and Career Readiness Pilot Program from which came the first of the CCR laws enacted in 2007 (Malin et al., 2017). This law “was primarily administered by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) and initially focused on funding four community college grants, with two additional community colleges and high school partners added in the third year” (p. 823).

The introduction of the Postsecondary and Workforce Readiness Act affirmed of all the high school graduates enrolling full-time in community colleges, nearly half failed to meet the criteria to enroll in college level courses and that “secondary and postsecondary graduates often lack critical workforce skills” as indicated by Illinois employers (Malin et al., 2017, p. 824).

With relation to equity, Malin et al. (2017) found, although ESSA notes provisions for underserved and underrepresented students, the state of Illinois placed minimal attention to

members of these subgroups by CCR, especially including gender and first-generation college-going student groups. They determined ESSA does not explicitly address equity issues resulting in the absence of equity concerns in CCR legislation and perpetuation of historically underserved groups being underrepresented in high-paying career fields. They argued it is an important goal to achieve CCR for all; however, the state should continue to ascertain why inequities have continued to manifest (Malin et al., 2017).

Lessons From NCLB for the ESSA

The policy report (Malin et al., 2017) provided a critical analysis of the ESSA by understanding the original law called ESEA passed by Congress and signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson on April 11, 1965, as part of the war on poverty. The ESEA was originally a civil rights initiative, and was written to stand for democracy, equity, and serve as the federal government's commitment to provide "equal educational opportunity by increasing funding and school improvement resources for states and districts" (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016, p. 6).

According to Mathis and Trujillo (2016), the amendments of the law throughout the years, along with the alleged negligence of politicians have eroded the original intent of ESEA. Instead, the states moved the focus of the law from support to control by sanctioning "test-based reforms in the minimum basic skills movement in the 1970s" (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016, p. 6). Several national reports followed, including *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, Goals 2000, and the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Mathis and Trujillo (2016) noted, "At each step, our educational policies became more test-based, top-down, prescriptive, narrow and punitive, and federal support to build the most struggling schools' capacity for improvement faded" (p. 6).

Mathis and Trujillo (2016) claimed a significant undertaking would need to occur to realize the equity-minded improvements the original legislation intended. The recommendations

the authors offered in this policy report are extensive and comprehensive. Some of the recommendations by Mathis and Trujillo (2016) include:

- Each state should provide adequate opportunities, funding, and resources for students to reach state goals. Funding must be available to schools to provide students' needs. Resources and support necessary for success must not be denied on the basis on the evaluation of the institution or its staff.
- States would revert to a supportive role and reduce their regulatory responsibilities. Students would have equal provisions to the highest quality instruction from teachers who offer excellent curriculum with relevant resources and facilities.
- Under ESSA, a structure that implements one or more nonacademic indicators will be used to measure school performance independently selected by each state. Incorporating nonacademic indicators increases educational equity and prospect of exposing the nation's broader educational function.
- Collaboration between states and districts, and social service and labor departments should occur to safeguard sufficient personal, social and economic opportunities to remove social issues in the school.
- Training for teachers to provide seminal and constructive self-evaluations should be mandated by states and school districts. The current emphasis on outcomes-based evaluations is inconsistent with the intricacies of teaching.
- External reviews should not be a punitive process. The emphasis should be on offering guidance and building support for school development and enhancement.
- Robust and periodic training should be mandatory to ensure external reviewers are highly qualified to meet prescribed standards.

- The criteria in applying interventions mandated by the state and district should be more rigorous, adopting peer-reviewed literature to examine relevant practices that surpass current methods.
- A coalition of internal and external stakeholders, including administrators, teachers, students, parents, community leaders, and researchers should be involved in the development of the state's evaluation or external evaluation program.

Literature Summary

In an extensive review of the literature, Mathis and Trujillo (2016) concluded the Obama era legislation was dissolved by policymakers into a regulatory policy and deviated from the original intent of the law initiated in 1965. Mathis and Trujillo (2016) noted the initial purpose was to “strengthen the capacity of our most economically impoverished schools to provide high quality public education for all students” (p. 6). The implications of state control over the ESSA seemed problematic because the information in the document was subject to interpretation rather than the providing of clear guidelines and definitions. Improvements in equity among underserved populations have also been diminished through the different iterations and amendments of the law over more than 50 years. The study provided detail on how states have regulated college and career readiness with respect of the ESSA recommendations to improve the implementation of the legislation going forward.

Gaining Access to Postsecondary Education

Most individuals who experience HIH sustain circumstances pertaining to poverty and trauma that can cause barriers to socioeconomic mobility, including accessing postsecondary education. The McKinney-Vento Act (McK-V Act) from 1987 focused on providing services and support to homeless students, but it is limited to K–12 education. Additionally, Mathis and

Trujillo (2016) and Clemens et al. (2018) revealed the federal legislation ESSA enacted in 2015 to help support student access to education with resources has fallen short of the original goals and intention of the original legislation, the ESEA passed in 1965. The ESSA has provisions for postsecondary education, but every state retains control of implementation. This has resulted in states acting more as regulatory agencies rather than as support systems for historically underserved population of students in the United States (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016).

Housing insecure and homeless individuals planning to continue their postsecondary education after completing high school or earning a general education diploma (GED) encounter additional challenges related to gaining access into college. The following section examines the literature on the foremost issues affecting college students who experience HIH: (a) financial aid and (b) cost of housing and tuition.

Financial Aid

Individuals who experience HIH consider postsecondary education to improve their situation and sustain a more stable future (Crutchfield et al., 2016). To access that education, many housing insecure and homeless students rely on financial aid to pay for costs associated with college; however, some students' experiences with receiving financial aid have been unfavorable, leaving them frustrated and discouraged. Two studies specifically looked at student access to financial aid among students experiencing extreme poverty. Lopez (2013) examined community college students in need and financial aid. Crutchfield et al. (2016) conducted a study on the perceptions of homeless college students and financial aid administrators regarding homeless students access to financial aid.

Unmet Need and Unclaimed Aid: Increasing Access to Financial Aid for Community College Students

Lopez (2013) discussed student perspectives from very low-income families trying to further their education by attending California community colleges and their struggle to secure funding for education. As the president and CEO of the College Access Foundation of California, Lopez had the opportunity to follow the educational progress of three students as they navigated their way through community college without financial contributions from family by using only financial aid, grants, scholarships, and income to secure their education.

Lopez (2013) provided demographic and other data from several sources serving students based on financial need instead of merit. Some of the data points included 4,500 scholarships granted to California high school students, in which 1 in 4 enrolled in a community college (Lopez, 2013). Most students were under 19 years old with two thirds being young women and 80% being first-generation college students. From the 4,500 scholarships awarded to students, 73% identified as Latino, 10% Asian, 9% African American, 6% White, and 2% identified as others (Lopez, 2013). High school GPAs varied from 2.0 to 4.0 and higher, and of these students, 46% enrolled in community college with GPAs below 3.0 (Lopez, 2013). The foundation receives these vital data from the grantees annually, which is matched with the National Student Clearinghouse to record and verify student persistence and graduation. The Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy at California State University, Sacramento, has completed further study of community college students. Lopez (2013) noted, “The Institute matches student records from the California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) statewide community colleges data system, which has information about students’ credits attempted and earned, degrees or certificates earned, transfers, and financial aid received” (p. 67).

The three students attending community colleges Lopez (2013) tracked were all Latino and living under the poverty level, although they were not homeless. Maria graduated high school with a high GPA of 3.7 and lived with her mom and nieces because her sister was incarcerated (Lopez, 2013). To attend college, Maria received a Pell Grant, a Board of Governors (BOG) waiver, and a \$1250 scholarship; however, only two thirds of the cost to attend community college was paid from those three financial resources. For this reason, Maria started working to make up the difference. The second student, Carlos, had a much lower GPA of 2.3 from high school. He was married, lived with his parents, and worked for his dad to offset the cost of rent (Lopez, 2013). As a nursing student in his third year, Carlos received a \$5500 Pell Grant, a BOG waiver, a \$500 Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, and a \$1250 scholarship (Lopez, 2013). Like Maria, the financial aid Carlos received only covered two thirds of the cost to attend college. The third student, Anita, was one of many from an undocumented student population (10%), and not eligible for any financial aid at the time of Lopez's (2013) writing. Although she was raised in extreme poverty and had to overcome a language barrier, Anita was optimistic, academically astute, and graduated with a high school GPA of 3.5 (Lopez, 2013).

A core issue Lopez (2013) emphasized was that many available financial resources were not expended by college students. The College Access Foundation of California has focused on remedying this issue by informing students about financial resources. Lopez (2013) reported:

In 2011–2012, less than half (47%) of all 18–24-year-olds enrolled in California community colleges received a BOG waiver, only 26% received a Pell Grant, and 5% received a Cal Grant. A higher proportion of foundation students receive aid. More than

three fourths (79%) secured BOG tuition fee waivers, but only two thirds (67%) received Pell Grants. Even fewer, 33% received a Cal Grant. (p. 69)

The foundation recognized their efforts reaching eligible community college students to inform them of available resources was less successful than their anticipated goal. Increased efforts by the foundation to improve financial aid awareness to college students started in 2012 by implementing strategies to highlight FASFA in high schools. Local school districts started competitions for most completed FASFA forms and an increase of 10%, from 47% to 57%, was recorded (Lopez, 2013). Additionally, some recommendations included the following:

- streamline the financial aid application process,
- improve and increase awareness of financial aid information,
- implement personal financial management tutorials at every opportunity, and
- encourage students to complete FASFA and apply for Cal Grants by March during their freshman year to be eligible for a second opportunity for a state entitlement grant.

Jumping Through Hoops to Get Financial Aid for College Students Who Are Homeless: Policy Analysis of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA) was enacted by Congress on September 27, 2007. Crutchfield et al. (2016) noted, “This legislature reauthorized the Higher Education Act and expanded the definition of ‘independent student’ to include youth who are (a) unaccompanied and homeless, or (b) unaccompanied, self-supporting, and at-risk of homelessness” (p. 154). The definition for homeless was referenced from the McK-V Act education subtitle and the CCRAA used the phrase “at-risk of homelessness” from the U.S.

Department of Education (ED), which refers to “students whose housing may cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate” (Crutchfield et al., 2016, p. 154).

The CCRAA uses verification processes to identify an individual as unaccompanied, homeless, at risk of homelessness, and self-supporting during the year in which the application is submitted (Crutchfield et al., 2016). According to the CCRAA, an individual should receive verification from one of the following authorities:

- a McKinney-Vento Act school district liaison,
- a HUD homeless assistance program director or their designee,
- a Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program director or their designee, and
- a financial aid administrator at a college or university. (Crutchfield et al., 2016, p. 154)

Additionally, the CCRAA indicated unaccompanied homeless youth are required to undergo the verification process annually including being interviewed, providing documentation, and establishing persistent homeless or risk of homelessness (Crutchfield et al., 2016).

The study CCRAA conducted examined the perceptions of unaccompanied homeless youth and financial aid administrators on the effectiveness of the CCRAA. Data from two research studies were used as the basis of this study. The first study used a purposive and snowball approach to conduct semistructured qualitative interviews with 20 homeless community college students ranging in age from 18–24 (Crutchfield et al., 2016). Crutchfield et al. (2016) noted, “Specifically, participants were asked questions focused on (a) their perceptions of themselves, (b) their knowledge of college services and how they used the financial aid office, and (c) the barriers they experienced in college” (p. 155). The second study also used a purposive and snowball approach to conduct semistructured qualitative interviews over the phone with

eight financial aid administrators (FAA) from eight university campuses (Crutchfield et al., 2016). The interviews aimed to learn the “FAA perspective on (a) how they experienced their work specifically with students who experience homelessness, (b) what supports they provided to students, and (c) what barriers they perceived in their work with students” (Crutchfield et al., 2016, p. 155).

Crutchfield et al. (2016) identified three significant themes upon analyzing the data, including challenges and provisions students faced with receiving financial aid, challenges and provisions FAAs encountered granting financial aid to students experiencing homelessness, and the struggle to oversee responsibilities of the financial aid office and serving the needs of students trying to attain an education (Crutchfield et al., 2016).

Student Perspective

The study captured the students’ point of view regarding the effects of financial aid on their education. Overall, students were aware that earning postsecondary education could be the difference between living with the same situation of housing insecurity and sustaining a more productive life (Crutchfield et al., 2016). Because students were financially unstable, their ability to receive financial support was a high priority; however, students discussed barriers they encountered while navigating through the financial aid process including providing documentation to verify their homelessness situation (Crutchfield et al., 2016).

For students living in homeless shelters or transitional houses, documentation was not an issue, but for others outside the support of such facilities, acquiring documentation was problematic. In addition to providing required documents by the CCRAA, students were asked periodically to turn in additional documents that were not required by the CCRAA. For example, one student was asked by a FAA to produce her parent’s tax records, which she found difficult

due to a severed relationship with her mother. The student reluctantly persuaded her mother to speak to the financial aid office staff in person before they believed the student's situation.

Another significant barrier was the long wait time students experienced before receiving their financial aid. Many participants from the study recalled receiving their financial aid later than the expected date given by the financial aid office. This presented difficult challenges of attending school without financial means. From the students' perspective, unnecessary barriers exhausted their valuable time, energy, and money trying to locate family members as a way to work out issues with the FAA. Crutchfield et al. (2016) noted the FAA's "lack of knowledge resulted in students having to wait months to get financial aid and impacted their ability to achieve academic success in their classes" (p. 156). Conversely, students who received financial aid in a timely manner felt less stressed, were able to work fewer hours, and had more time to focus on their schoolwork (Crutchfield et al., 2016).

Financial Aid Administrator Perspective

Each of the eight FAAs who participated in the study received CCRAA training including facilitating the financial aid process to qualified students. Crutchfield et al. (2016) found discrepancies in how each FAA implemented those policies. Verifying CCRAA eligibility was either simple or complex. The process was easy when students provided letters from homeless shelters or letters from their K-12 district homeless liaisons; however, when students who failed to designate their homeless status in the FASFA form but disclosed their homeless situation during the meeting with the FAA, red flags emerged. Some FAAs recalled when students were in this situation, the protocol included additional forms to establish homelessness. The FAAs were aware this was problematic for some students because the forms required letters from family members, which they knew was a major issue for students. Another issue related to

FAs requiring proper verification of homeless status was the issue of their fear of fraud and safeguarding an ethical process of awarding financial aid. Crutchfield et al. (2016) noted the FAs “spoke of their commitment to student progress, but also their commitment as gatekeepers for taxpayer money that needed to be protected from fraudulent behavior” (p. 157). Additionally, accountability for possible audits was a related issue. These inconsistencies in perceptions among students and FAs is an opportunity for policymakers, practitioners, and researchers to collaborate to remove financial barriers for students (Crutchfield et al., 2016).

Literature Summary

The reviewed literature on the challenges associated with financial aid for students who experience HIH reveals a bottleneck in the educational system for students trying to access college and persist in school. Both studies exposed the variety of obstacles underrepresented students encounter when applying for financial aid. Although Lopez (2013) did not focus specifically on housing insecure or homeless students, she highlighted the issues of three students living in severe poverty. Lopez (2013) also provided information about the amount of undistributed financial aid and the lack of awareness of students in knowing about and accessing various financial resources.

Both pieces of literature also provided student narratives and their experience with securing financial aid. The educational progress of the three students tracked by Lopez (2013) received a substantial amount of financial aid including Pell Grants, scholarships, and BOG waivers, but the support did not satisfy their total cost for school. The difference between the two reviewed pieces of literatures was that the students discussed in Lopez (2013)’s study lived below the poverty line, but were not considered homeless, and received communal support from family members and high school staff. The students in the Crutchfield et al. (2016) study were

homeless or at risk of homelessness, who did not have the support from any family members or the community. Both pieces of literature described student financial aid advocates although the role of Lopez as president and CEO of the College Access Foundation of California provided her more leverage to support students. The financial aid administrators who participated in the study would require additional staff development and policy changes in the financial aid process to efficiently and expeditiously continue supporting homeless students.

Cost of Housing and Tuition

Postsecondary education is viewed by many people as a means to gain knowledge and skills to secure a more sustainable financial future; however, even the most dedicated and able college students encounter financial hurdles, which can stifle their educational progress (Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2016). Two significant financial costs of attending higher education are housing and tuition. The literature in this section includes an article that explained the deficiencies in former President Obama's proposal for free community college tuition (Douglas-Gabriel, 2015), and a report that shared the perception of students on the costs and tradeoffs they encounter while attending community college (Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2016).

There Is a Big Catch in Obama's Plan for Free Community College

In 2015, former President Barack Obama unveiled the America's College Promise, which proposed free tuition for responsible students attending 2 years of community college. The proposal planned to help an estimated 9 million people per year to offset the first two years of an undergraduate degree or gain skills in preparation for the workforce (Douglas-Gabriel, 2015); however, when examined closer, the proposal's claim to provide "free education" fell short of its promise. At that time, a study from College Board revealed tuition and fees covered only 21% of students' budget when paying for off-campus housing. Douglas-Gabriel (2015) noted, "While

the average tuition and fees at a community college is \$3,347 for the 2014–2015 academic year, housing costs another \$7,705, books averaged \$1,328 and transportation added up to \$1,735” (para. 3). Students can live at home, but many community college students live independently or have unstable living situations. Other options to make up the difference of paying for college include federal Pell Grants, working part time or full time, or applying for a student loan (Douglas-Gabriel, 2015).

The article featured comments from the higher education scholar, Goldrick-Rab, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison who offered some solutions to help students offset the difference of earning a more affordable college education (Douglas-Gabriel, 2015). In a paper submitted by Goldrick-Rab:

She proposed having the federal government provide grants to schools to cover two years of tuition and states redirect higher ed funding to cover books and supplies. Living expenses, she said, could be covered through 15 hours a week of state or federal work study at a living wage. (as cited in Douglas-Gabriel, 2015, para. 6)

Goldrick-Rab suggested consolidating \$85 billion from all federal grants, tax breaks, and funds from workforce training to help cover free tuition for more people and provide greater access to postsecondary education (Douglas-Gabriel, 2015).

On the Verge: Costs and Tradeoffs Facing Community College Students

In this report, Cochrane and Szabo-Kubitz (2016) exposed auxiliary costs of higher education extending beyond the basic needs costs of food and housing, including (a) transportation, (b) cost of childcare, (c) books, (d) lab fees, (e) school supplies, (f) car repairs, and (g) medical bills. These costs influence college affordability, particularly for low-income students attending community colleges who aspire to earn a good quality and affordable

education. A 2015 study conducted by The Institute for College Access & Success surveyed 12,000 students from 22 California community colleges about their expenses, financial aid, and their decision-making process when financial resources are depleted (Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2016).

More than one third of the respondents also shared personal stories. One student commented, “I am a student who is consistently on the verge of being homeless, and being a full-time student makes finding a job to work with my schedule extremely difficult. More grants would really help me put myself through college” (Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2016, p. 6).

Another student said:

Helping with housing is very important for a full-time student like me. I have to sleep house to house because I am homeless. It would help greatly if there were an on-campus living program or more funds in financial aid so I could rent an apartment. (Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2016, p. 6)

Additionally, one student described trying to succeed amid several obstacles caused by not receiving financial aid including loss of housing, the inability to pay for books, and living in a park. The student shared:

I work really hard to keep up with the rest of the class, because I have lost my place three times due to my inability to pay because of my lack of financial aid. I have done two semesters without books and cry daily because I just want to give up sometimes. I really don't know what to do to prove I want and deserve this other than continue to show up. And I pray I don't get killed in the park while I sleep. (Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2016, p. 6)

A different student shared the arduous process of proving their HIH status and how the complexity of their housing situation affected applying for and receiving financial aid, commenting:

In fall 2013, I was living out of my car and couch surfing. I was not receiving any assistance for school from my parents. I appealed to financial aid to override my dependency status but was denied. I also tried to apply as a homeless/low-income student but was denied because I was splitting a room in an apartment with four other people.

(Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2016, p. 7)

Additional themes appeared in the Institute for College Access & Success survey including family responsibilities, food costs and insecurity, the cost of textbooks and supplies, transportation costs, the impact of delayed disbursements, challenges getting help and information when federal loans are not available, and making costly financial choices to fill the gap when a job must come first (Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2016).

Despite the fact community college students are typically at a lower socioeconomic status in comparison with their peers who attend 4-year institutions, they are usually eligible for less financial aid (Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2016). The Institute for College Access & Success survey also revealed 55% of financial aid recipients attending college full time are unable to contribute to the cost of their education because their income is below the government's required limit. When there are deficits with all associated costs to education and student financial resources are exhausted, community college students resort to working more hours, which undermines academic success (Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz, 2016).

Literature Summary

Both Douglas-Gabriel (2015) and Cochrane and Szabo-Kubitz (2016) acknowledged, although tuition and housing costs for individuals who live independently from their parents is a significant amount, other associated costs can postpone or terminate postsecondary education. Both Douglas-Gabriel (2015) and Cochrane and Szabo-Kubitz (2016) also noted, as the last resort, students preferred to supplement educational costs by acquiring work or extending existing working hours. Working too many hours usually results in the reduction of units or course withdrawal. Cochrane and Szabo-Kubitz (2016) also revealed the challenges community college students encountered in obtaining and accessing financial aid and the difficulties they faced as a result of not receiving aid or long delays in obtaining aid.

Student Persistence in a College Environment

Nguyen (2011) noted, “Community colleges have often been viewed as educational pathways for students who would not otherwise have access to postsecondary education” (p. 59). The traditional open admission policy of community colleges allows access for nontraditional and underrepresented students, including (a) first-generation students, (b) low-income students, (c) students of color, (d) single parents, (e) displaced workers, (f) disabled students, and (g) housing insecure and homeless students (Nguyen, 2011). Many students encounter challenges that can impede their progress and possibly result in institutional withdrawal; however, once enrolled in a community college, housing insecure and homeless students may have a higher risk

of delaying, postponing, or suspending their education indefinitely because of academic and social integration issues.

Institutional Engagement

Student engagement in community colleges is an unrelenting cause for concern for institutional leaders. Kuh (2003) defined student engagement as “the time and energy students devote to educationally sound activities inside and outside of the classroom, and the policies and practices that institutions use to induce students to take part in these activities” (p. 25). Without consideration of improving retention programs, institutions risk the issue of high attrition rates in community colleges.

The following section examines two publications that provide analysis on student persistence and student engagement. The first is a study conducted to identify how the success and persistence of high-risk students are influenced by the attitudes and behaviors of faculty and staff (Schreiner et al., 2011). The second is a scholarly article focused on challenges of student engagement in community colleges (Nguyen, 2011).

The Impact of Faculty and Staff on High-Risk College Student Persistence

Schreiner et al. (2011) focused on the obstacles high-risk college students encounter in achieving a college degree. The term high-risk is “defined as those students whose academic preparation, prior school performance, or personal characteristics may contribute to academic failure or early departure from college” (Schreiner et al., 2011, p. 321). Schreiner et al. (2011) revealed research on the success of high-risk college students is relatively limited. In a study conducted by Levine and Nidiffer (1996), the definition for success 24 first-generation low-income students provided was gaining access to college (Levine & Nidiffer, 1996, as cited in Schreiner et al., 2011). The study concluded that 22 of the 24 students interviewed claimed the

substantial influence of other people resulted in their success. The support of the faculty and staff and the provision of hope, inspiration, and sincerity in the students' abilities enabled them to succeed (Schreiner et al., 2011). The Levine and Nidiffer (1996) study referred to other researchers' use of Tinto's revised (1975, 1987, 1993) internationalist model of student departure from college:

Tinto's (1975) initial theory postulated that students' entry characteristics influenced their initial commitment to the institution and to the goal of graduating, but that students' academic and social integration while in college influenced their subsequent institutional and goal commitment, which in turn affected their persistence. (Schreiner et al., 2011, p. 322)

One of the aspects Schreiner et al. (2011) hypothesized as a substantial influence on social integration was students' views of the college's commitment to student welfare; however, the authors point out that although the positive results of student–faculty collaboration on students learning, integration into the college environment, and ensuing persistence have been widely studied, the course of relationship development has been less understood, especially for high-risk students.

The researchers in this study used an exploratory qualitative approach to understand the perceptions of 62 high-risk students from nine different colleges and universities to identify how the success and persistence of high-risk students are influenced by the attitudes and behaviors of faculty and staff (Schreiner et al., 2011). The research question that guided the study as noted by Schreiner et al. (2011) was “What are the attitudes and behaviors of faculty and staff that contribute to the successful persistence of high-risk students?” (p. 324). The study consisted of two parts with an initial interview of the participants where they were asked to identify a faculty

or staff member, followed by two subsequent interviews of each faculty or staff member that was identified. The demographics of the student participants included 52% male, 48% female, 47% White, 18% African American, 13% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and 10% were international students (Schreiner et al., 2011). Researchers asked students general questions about their decision to enroll in college, if they had ever considered withdrawing, and who influenced their persistence and subsequent success in college.

Only 54 institutional personnel were interviewed because eight were duplicate individuals that students identified. The demographics of the personnel participants included 70% undergraduate faculty, 30% staff, 69% male, 31% female, 76% White, 11% Hispanic, 4% African American, 4% international, and one participant was multiethnic (Schreiner et al., 2011). The first faculty and staff interviews “focused on their perceptions of the behaviors with which they engaged with students” (Schreiner et al., 2011, p. 325). In the second faculty and staff interviews, researchers asked the participants about their strengths, how that attribute contributed in their work with students, and what methods they implemented to help students persist.

The study yielded seven themes, which were identified from the narratives of the students and campus personnel (Schreiner et al., 2011), including (a) desire to connect with students, (b) being unaware of their influence on students at critical junctures, (c) wanting to make a difference in students’ lives, (d) possessing a wide variety of personality styles and strengths but being perceived by students as genuine and authentic, (e) being intentional about connecting personally with students, (f) different approaches used by faculty compared to staff, and (g) differences in the types of behaviors that community college students reported as fostering their success. After identifying the themes, the interviews of both groups of participants were combined to analyze recurring patterns.

The theme of connection was prevalent in many interviews where high-risk students and campus personnel developed academic relationships with descriptors such as (a) caring, (b) compassionate, (c) supportive, (d) rapport, (e) takes and interest in, (f) helps me, (g) makes me feel important, (h) respects me, and (i) listens to me (Schreiner et al., 2011). From the personnel's point of view, student connections meant liking students, wanting to spend time with students, enjoying students, and interacting with students outside of class.

Another common theme was timing because the research indicated successful high-risk students seemed to receive support from unassuming campus personnel during a moment where they were about to give up on their education (Schreiner et al., 2011). When revealed to some of the faculty and staff participants about this theme, the majority commented "they were simply trying to make an impact on student learning and success" (Schreiner et al., 2011, p. 327). Other significant themes from the study included the (a) authenticity, (b) approachability, (c) uniqueness, and (d) listening skills of campus personnel who made a difference in the educational success of these high-risk students.

Schreiner et al. (2011) noted the results contributed to the broad qualitative research on student-faculty interaction "by focusing more specifically on the attitudes and behaviors of the faculty and staff who have influenced high-risk students in their ability to succeed and remain enrolled in college" (p. 332). The implications of this study involved institutional hiring practices for campus positions that directly influence students (Schreiner et al., 2011). The researchers recommended asking some interview questions that are more related to candidates' passions, their most recent interaction with students that made a difference, their attraction to the college setting, or other interview questions that exhibit attributes influencing students' capacity to succeed and persist.

Challenges of Student Engagement in Community Colleges

Nguyen (2011) noted the “lack of student engagement in community colleges is a problem that should be addressed on an institutional level and within the student culture” (p. 59). Nguyen (2011) described the convenient and accessible nature of community colleges especially for part-time students, which at that time of the study represented close to two thirds of the national student population. Additionally, adjunct faculty accounted for nearly two thirds of the total teaching personnel at community colleges. The issue with these two data sets is past research has revealed part-time students and faculty are less involved with institutional engagement because they spend less time on campus while occupying their remaining time with other life priorities such as parenthood, being a care provider, and additional employment.

Regarding advising, some part-time students who only attend evening classes found career counseling, financial aid services, and credit-transfer assistance difficult because student service offices are typically closed during evening hours (Nguyen, 2011). An alternative noted by Nguyen (2011) indicated “these students might see faculty members as better sources of academic advising because they have more personal contact with faculty members in class than they do with staff academic advisors” (p. 61).

However, the most significant challenge community colleges have encountered regarding student engagement is “fragmentation in our programs (Levine et al., 2004) and isolation and divisiveness among both faculty members and administrators” (Nguyen, 2011, p. 59). This statement described a continual issue community colleges encounter that may have negative ramifications on successfully applying policies and practices that enhance students’ educational experience (Nguyen, 2011).

Recommendations for increasing campus-wide efforts to promote student engagement were offered, including fostering a culture of engagement “where faculty, staff and students alike (McClenney & Greene, 2005) are committed to connect with each other and the educational experience so that students are presented with an environment that is conducive to learning” (Nguyen, 2011, p. 62). Another recommendation involves the development of alternative and innovative methods of engaging students who are traditionally categorized at-risk for attrition, such as part-time students, first-generation students, and students of color.

Literature Summary

Overall, the study by Schreiner et al. (2011) provided more comprehensive information on student engagement and persistence than the article by Nguyen (2011). Schreiner et al. (2011) included the background of the problem, methodology, study participants, research procedure, data, findings, discussion, limitations, implications of practice, and conclusion. Nguyen’s (2011) article was limited to the review of existing literature explaining challenges with student engagement faced by community colleges. Schreiner et al. (2011) conducted interviews with students, faculty, and staff to understand their attitudes and behaviors toward engagement, which subsequently influenced persistence; however, both Schreiner et al. (2011) and Nguyen’s (2011) emphasized the significance of institutional engagement for the success of community college students. Additionally, both Schreiner et al. (2011) and Nguyen’s (2011) expressed the positive interactions between college personnel and students, especially with faculty and students, is a vital connection that helps students adapt to the social and academic culture of the campus.

Chapter Summary

The literature reviewed in this chapter represented relevant peer-reviewed journal research, academic books, scholarly articles, and reports that contribute to the development of

this study. The conceptual framework using Tinto's (1993) model of student departure framed the study by explaining housing insecure or homeless students' precollegiate experiences through completion, citing the factors involved at every stage that contribute to students departing from college. The theoretical framework using TIC guided the study and described the relationship between trauma and the variety of social and well-being issues for which people receive services and treatment focused on addressing an individual's traumatic experience, which has been closely linked to HIH.

Literature on trauma and poverty exposed the close relationship and the effects each or both can have on individuals who experience HIH. One significant point explained in the literature relevant to people experiencing HIH is the connection between stress and trauma. The literature has indicated three different types of stress. The first type is *positive stress* (e.g., a student's feeling about a final examination or a speech in front of the class). Researchers explained positive stress can actually be beneficial to improving knowledge (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017). The second type is *tolerable stress*, which is described as an occurrence that can be severe although infrequent with a support system (e.g., family members, friends, clergy) in place for the individual. An example of tolerable stress is the death of a parent, which is a severe and infrequent event that can be consoled. The way an individual reacts to or handles the situation is important. Additionally, a support system is significant for the individual experiencing tolerable stress. Without a support system, the situation has the potential of escalating to the third type of stress called *toxic stress*. Trauma and toxic stress intersect at this stage where an event occurs that is severe, frequent, and without a support system (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017). An example of toxic stress or trauma occurs when a wife is constantly physically and mentally abused by her spouse. The abused wife may choose to leave the

situation, which can cause her to begin a life of homelessness, particularly if she does not have any possessions, anywhere to go, or a support system to help her cope with the situation. Additionally, a scenario may occur where poverty itself is considered the trauma. Living on the streets or constantly worrying about where to sleep can be traumatic for individuals who experience homelessness for an extended duration.

Federal legislation in education enacted to provide financial and resource support for unaccompanied youth has been narrow in scope and highly regulated at the state level. The McK-V Act defined homeless students in its legislation, but it is limited to K–12 students. The ESSA contains provisions for postsecondary education, but the legislation has been diluted through its implementation by states who act as regulatory agencies instead of support entities (Mathis & Trujillo, 2016).

Individuals who manage to graduate from high school or earn a GED while continuing to endure HIH consider postsecondary education a viable solution to living an improved, productive, and sustainable life. A gap in research emerged in the literature review in which Hallett and Freas (2018) noted, “More research is needed to understand how to both increase access to postsecondary education for individuals without residential stability as well as how to encourage their success once enrolled” (p. 726).

Although the phenomenon of HIH among students in higher education has been prevalent for many years, literature on the experiences of students in these situations, particularly those attending community college, has been limited. Gupton (2017) noted, “Despite the increased media attention to homeless students attending colleges and universities across the country, little educational research exists related to this particular student population” (p. 192). Many of the available studies have focused on quantitative methodology or surveys collecting data from sets

of respondents. Although quantitative studies provide information to higher learning institutions including data identifying sample size, percentages of students, ethnicities, age groups, and marginalized groups that are most affected, the ways housing insecure and homeless students experience community college remains relatively understudied. Bowers and O'Neill (2019) noted, "Most of what has been published in the quantitative literature is purely descriptive, lacking causes and consequences" (p. 2). After a detailed meta-analysis, they observed that "few articles explore the lived experiences of this population" (p. 1).

Overall, review of the literature on HIH students helped inform the experiences of community college students dealing with HIH, especially as it relates to access in higher education and academic persistence. This chapter began by reviewing the literature on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks that guided this study. Next, the literature on poverty and trauma of individuals explains the foundational impacts on HIH, federal legislation establishing rights and support for housing insecure and homeless individuals, followed by the experiences of housing insecure and homeless individuals' access to postsecondary education and their persistence to remain enrolled. The chapter concluded with exposing gaps in the literature to substantiate the focus of this dissertation study.

The next chapter includes research methodology used for this study on community college students experiencing HIH. The research design, study setting, study participants, instrumentation used to conduct the study, data collection, data sources, and data analysis are also presented. The data collected are contained in the subsequent chapter followed by the findings.

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

Chapter 3 includes an overview of the research methodology used in this study. The chapter begins with a review of the purpose of the study, research questions, and how the theoretical and conceptual frameworks informed this study. Next, the research design, study setting, study participants, instrumentation used to conduct the study, data collection, data sources, and data analysis are presented. Finally, this chapter concludes with an explanation of how study quality was achieved, ethical considerations, a reflexivity statement, the study's limitations, and a chapter summary.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students before, during, and after admission to a southern California community college. The study aimed to illuminate the experiences that influenced the students' access to higher education and academic persistence.

Research Questions

The research questions (RQs) that guided this study were:

RQ 1. What are the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students at a southern California community college?

RQ 2. In what ways do housing insecurity and homelessness influence college access to a southern California community college?

RQ 3. In what ways do housing insecurity and homelessness influence academic persistence at a southern California community college?

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

The trauma-informed care (TIC) model served as the theoretical framework for this study and offered a logical construct of related concepts that help provide an image or visual display of how ideas relate to one another in Tinto's (1993) conceptual framework (Grant & Osanloo, 2014). Hercik (2016) noted the TIC model, "offers a multitiered organizational change approach, which aims to improve staff understanding, build individual and organizational capacity, identify adversity and implement real practice, policy and case management changes" (para. 9). The framework reinforces organizational changes associated with current trauma-informed methods while introducing further understanding with adolescents and young adults (Hercik, 2016). Additionally, TIC model helped identify relevant themes in the literature review.

The conceptual framework that informed this study was Tinto's (1993) model of student departure, which explains that preentry attributes, including (a) family background, (b) skills, (c) abilities, and (d) prior schooling, can indicate how students will eventually respond to the campus environment and persist or drop out of college (Tinto, 1993). The model of student departure was relevant for this study based on the model's delineation from pre-entry attributes to outcomes to explore the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students. Additionally, the conceptual framework helped identify relevant themes in the literature review and informed the development of the interview questions used in this study. Table 3.1 shows the relationship between the actions of care delineated by the TIC model and the attributes that occur during different times of students' educational experiences categorized in Tinto's (1993) model of student departure.

Table 3.1*Alignment of the Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks*

Theoretical framework: Trauma-informed care	Conceptual framework: Tinto's (1993) model of student departure
Understand	Precollege attributes: Family background Skills and abilities Prior schooling
Identify	Initial goals and commitments: Intentions Goal and institutional commitments External commitments
Empathize	Institutional experience: Academic system Formal: Academic performance Informal: Faculty/staff interactions Social system Formal: Extra-curricular activities Informal: Peer group interactions
Implement	Integration: Academic integration Social integration
Identify	Final goals and commitments: Intentions Goal and institutional commitments External commitments
Build trust Create collaboration Set goals Empower change Support success	Outcome: Departure decision

Alignment Table

To establish effective research, the researcher developed a table to represent how the elements in this study align. The alignment table includes literature findings, research questions, the conceptual framework, and interview questions. The alignment table can be found in Appendix A.

Research Design

This study used generic qualitative research to explore the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students. Percy et al. (2015) described the methodology as research that “investigates people’s reports of their subjective opinions, attitudes, beliefs, or reflections on their experiences, of things in the outer world” (p. 78). Research design considerations for this study were other qualitative methodologies, including narrative inquiry, case study, and transcendental phenomenology. First considered was narrative inquiry, which focuses on learning from an individual’s life story and makes meaning from those experiences that can be shared and more generally understood. Next, a case study, which concentrates on a comprehensive study of one or more cases in a bounded system, was similarly considered (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017); however, this study was designed to explore participants’ experiences. Finally, transcendental phenomenology was considered; however, “Edmund Husserl believed that phenomenology was presuppositional. When using transcendental phenomenology, there can be no use of theoretical frameworks” (Peoples, 2021, p. 30). The role of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks was essential to the efficacy of this study, and therefore, transcendental phenomenology research design was not considered. After exploring these various methodologies, the researcher decided to use generic qualitative research that “is not guided by the explicit or established set of philosophical assumptions in the form of one of the known qualitative methodologies” (Caeli et al., 2003, p. 4).

Study Setting

A southern California community college was chosen as the setting for the study. The location of the study remains anonymous to protect the participants and confidentiality of the data. Although California’s economy has experienced growth in recent years, the economic

expansion has contributed to “increases in the cost of living and a widening income inequality” (Thomas, 2018). Additionally, Thomas (2018) noted, “the Federal Poverty Line (FPL) is based on national cost-of-living averages and fails to take into account the exorbitant cost of living in the Golden State” (para. 3). As illustrated in Table 3.2, a 2015 United Way of California study discovered a more accurate description was revealed when housing costs were factored into the comparison (Thomas, 2018).

Table 3.2

Real Cost of Living and the Federal Poverty Line Comparison

County	% Households below real cost	% Households below Federal Poverty Line
California	31	12
Orange	29	9
Los Angeles	37	14
Ventura	25	7
San Diego	30	11
Santa Barbara	31	10
Riverside	34	12
San Bernardino	35	15

Note. From “A Real Cost Measure of Poverty,” by Thomas A., 2018
(<https://www.newgeography.com/content/005854-a-tale-two-socals-poverty-southern-california>)

Poverty has continued to pose problems for California residents and is rising. In the first quarter of 2023, California’s poverty rate increased to 13.2% from 11.7% in 2021 based on the Public Policy Institute of California (Reyes-Velarde, 2023). In examining poverty among California community college students, the 2023 RealCollege survey reported the results for basic needs insecurities by region among 66,741 respondents from 88 California community colleges. The survey revealed, in the South-Central Coast, Los Angeles/Orange County, Inland Empire and Desert, and San Diego/Imperial areas, 57% to 61% of the respondents self-identified as housing insecure, and 21% to 29% self-identified as homeless (The RP Group, 2023).

Study Participants

The selection criteria for participants in this study included students who experienced housing insecurity or homelessness and enrolled in at least one course. Initially, the researcher used purposeful sampling to solicit student participants through community college staff members of the federal outreach and student services programs, commonly known as TRiO, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, and Foster Youth Services. Additionally, staff members from homeless shelters, transitional facilities, and other community resources were requested to help identify participants for this study. However, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic halted participant recruitment, as all California community college campuses closed and courses moved to online formats. As a result, recruiting participants became unfeasible, and the study paused for 2.5 years. Upon the gradual return of students on campus, the researcher eventually relied on snowball sampling, which “allows recommendations from participants to guide the further development of the sample” (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017, p. 142).

The number of participants in qualitative studies varies. Polkinghorne (1989, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2017) recommended “researchers interview from five to 25 individuals who have experienced the phenomenon” (p. 61), or as suggested by Boyd (2001, as cited in Groenewald, 2004), “two to 10 participants or research subjects as sufficient to reach saturation” (p. 46). Finally, as the restrictions of the COVID-19 global pandemic were alleviated, students were allowed to access the campus and resume in-person instruction, if desired. The researcher identified and interviewed seven participants from a southern California community college for this study, aligning with the chosen methodology.

Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection was the researcher conducting semistructured interviews of participants developed by the researcher and reviewed by the dissertation committee members of this study. Informed by the conceptual framework of this study, the researcher developed an interview protocol (see Appendix C). The semistructured interviews were designed to provide insight into the early educational experiences, significant events, and family circumstances of housing insecure and homeless students and detailed explanations of housing insecure and homeless students' experiences. Additionally, specific questions were asked, providing further understanding of how the participants experienced college entry and their progression in higher education.

Data Collection and Data Sources

First, the researcher completed the required Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (see Appendix D). Then, the researcher requested approval from the Kansas State University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix E). Next, the researcher received approval to proceed with the study from the participating community college by completing the Notice of Cooperative Participation in Research form (see Appendix F). Finally, the researcher prepared and distributed an email letter inviting students for individual interviews (see Appendix G).

The primary data sources for this study included one-on-one interviews with seven students who experienced HIH while enrolled in a southern California community college. The researcher collected data from study participants through digital audio-recorded Zoom interview sessions online or in person. Before each session, every participant was provided with the Informed Consent Form (see Appendix H), background information, and details about this study's efficacy. The interview process started with introductions, answering participant

questions, and reviewing the interview protocol. To establish a calm and trusting environment, the researcher explained the interview process, including the study's purpose and significance, which helped participants "feel comfortable and respond honestly and comprehensively" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 114). Additionally, the researcher explained the protocol for preserving participants' identity and data confidentiality. Next, the researcher provided a statement regarding the participants' ability to deny answering questions or opting out of the study. Then, the participants were informed of the \$25 gift card they would receive upon completion of the interview. Finally, the study participants were asked to focus on the phenomenon of HIH, details of particular consciousness and influence, and then express their experience completely (Moustakas, 1994). The interviews were conducted through Zoom sessions or in-person, digitally recorded on an external hard drive, and will be stored in a locked safe for five years from the date of the interviews.

Data Analysis

The approach to the research process was inductive which is characterized by "moving from localized understandings to broader interpretations" (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017, p. 34). Thematic analysis is "an approach to analysis that allows you to move from broad understanding of your data to identifying themes across the dataset" (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017, p. 168). This generic qualitative research used inductive thematic analysis to achieve several objectives. The researcher (a) prepared and organized data for analysis by clearly labeling the data, developing a data table, and storing the data in a secure location; (b) became familiar with the data by listening and repeat listening to the audio recordings or video recordings; (c) transcribed the data using verbatim transcription; (d) created memos as written reflections of the data; (e) coded the data to identify broad passages, ideas or statements of substantive interest that revealed an essential

aspect of the HIIH phenomenon; (f) transitioned from codes to grouping codes into categories, which formed supporting themes, and developed themes that expanded on the major ideas through the use of extended-phrases or sentences created for each interview question; and (g) developed an analysis map (see Appendix I) to serve as an audit trail of the decision-making process (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017; Saldaña, 2013).

This generic qualitative research was informed by the hermeneutic circle as a process of analyzing and understanding the data. Peoples (2021) described the hermeneutical circle as a spiral process where the “understanding increases by moving from the understanding of parts to the understanding of the whole and again back to parts, continually changing as new data are introduced” (p. 33). Data analysis using the hermeneutic circle begins with reading the transcript, understanding the parts as codes, categorizing the information, synthesizing to develop themes, and then reexamining the transcript as a whole (Peoples, 2021). This process is reiterated as the researcher gains new interpretation and requires continual revision of that understanding, which can culminate in a complete understanding of the phenomenon (Peoples, 2021).

The researcher used Microsoft Word to transcribe each audio recording from the interview sessions verbatim. Microsoft Word was selected because of the software’s simplicity and ability to save files in a PDF format. Next, the audio recordings were compared with the transcriptions three times for accuracy. Once the transcripts were finalized, they were sent to each corresponding participant for member checking, which confirmed the transcriptions accurately reflected the information communicated during the interviews.

Quirkos (2023), a cloud-based qualitative data analysis software, assisted with data analysis. Quirkos (2023) was selected as an organizational tool capable of storing and categorizing data sources for simple access and cross-referencing. The researcher conducted in-

vivo coding to identify substantive words, short statements, or passages from participants' transcriptions. Saldaña (2013) noted, "In-vivo coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies (. . .) that prioritize and honor the participant's voice" (p. 138). Furthermore, Saldaña (2013) noted in-vivo coding provides researchers with "heightened awareness of the individual's unique circumstances" (p. 94). Using the steps recommended by Peoples (2021) and Lochmiller and Lester (2017) to develop themes, the researcher established meanings from the quotes of participants' interviews, extended the narratives to develop general descriptions grouped into categories, formed supporting themes, and finally developed themes that expanded on the major ideas using an extended phrase or sentence created for each interview question.

Study Quality

The researcher used the pragmatic approach delineated in Tracy's (2010) *The Eight Big Tent Criteria* to establish the trustworthiness and quality of this study. The model establishes the quality of qualitative research "marked by: (a) worthy topic, (b) rich rigor, (c) sincerity, (d) credibility, (e) resonance, (f) significant contribution, (g) ethics, and (h) meaningful coherence" (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017, para. 5). Table 3.3 displays the eight big tent criteria and the study's elements that substantiate the criteria.

Table 3.3*Tracy's (2010) Eight "Big Tent" Criteria*

Criteria	Study elements
Worthy topic	• Understanding housing insecure and homeless students' experiences to improve college access and persistence rates
Rich rigor	• Trauma-informed care theoretical framework • Tinto's (1993) model of student departure conceptual framework • Qualitative research methodology
Sincerity	• Reflexivity statement
Credibility	• Rich descriptions of the findings • Member checking
Resonance	• Transferable findings • Verbatim language from participants
Significant contribution	• Contribute to literature influencing knowledge, theories, practice, and policy
Ethics	• Completion of CITI training • Institutional Review Board approval • Completion of the Notice of Cooperative Participation in Research form • Signed informed consent forms • Anonymity and confidentiality of participants
Meaningful coherence	• Alignment table (see Appendix A)

Understanding the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students at a community college was essential and worthy of study to improve college access and persistence. Using the TIC model as the theoretical framework and Tinto's (1993) model of student departure as the conceptual framework to guide this generic qualitative study exhibited rich rigor. Sincerity and transparency were demonstrated by including a reflexivity statement that examined the researcher's assumptions, beliefs, and judgment systems. The thick descriptions of the findings and member checking, which involved informing "research participants about the study findings are invaluable opportunities to deepen the researcher's understanding of the phenomenon of interest" and demonstrate credibility (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017, p. 182). Resonance is the degree to which qualitative research significantly affects an audience to the extent that a deep

connection is developed. The resonance for this study was achieved through participants' use of verbatim language and transferable findings.

This study contributes to the literature on the experiences of housing insecure and homeless community college students to influence knowledge, theories, practice, and policy. The researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative, followed protocol to receive Institutional Review Board approval, obtained signed informed consent forms, and maintained the anonymity of the participants and the confidentiality of their data. Finally, the alignment table (see Appendix A) presents the correlations between the literature findings, research questions, conceptual framework, and interview questions, which were developed to display the meaningful coherence of this study.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics relates to many attributes of transparency, honesty, and truthfulness in all aspects of a study, and in qualitative research, there are four categories: procedural, situational, relational, and exiting (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). The transcripts of each study participant provided the researcher with personal descriptions of their experiences, which many would have been reluctant to share. Before the participant interviews, the researcher completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (see Appendix D). Next, the researcher received Institutional Review Board approval from Kansas State University (see Appendix E). Finally, the Notice of Cooperative Participation in Research form (see Appendix F) was completed. The aforementioned action plans are examples of procedural ethics. Situational ethics involve “upholding rules and standards of ethical behavior, such as choosing when and where to audio- or video-record participants . . . and assessing if the data’s disclosure might negatively impact participants” (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017, para. 27). All respondents to the interview invitation were

contacted before the study for information regarding the duration, procedures, and location of the interview. The informed consent form notified participants of their ability to withdraw from the study at any time and explained they were being audio recorded (see Appendix H). Relational ethics involves researchers being mindful of their impact on individuals in the research site (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017). Due to the sensitive topic of HIH, the anonymity of all participants and confidentiality of the interview information was the highest priority. The researcher was responsible for the participants' dignity, privacy, and well-being during the study. The identity of each participant was coded using alphanumeric designations on the interview transcriptions for reporting purposes. The interviews were conducted through Zoom sessions or in-person, digitally recorded on an external hard drive, and stored in a locked safe for 5 years from the date of the interviews. Tracy and Hinrichs (2017) described exiting ethics as "the care and thoughtfulness of how researchers leave the site and share their results with the scholarly community" (para. 29). The extent to which a study is interpreted and used in the scholarly community is uncertain; however, researchers are responsible for presenting the study in a manner that circumvents "unjust or unintended consequences for their participants, particularly those who may be members of marginalized populations" (Tracy & Hinrichs, 2017, para. 29).

Reflexivity Statement

Jamieson et al. (2023) described reflexivity in qualitative research as "the act of examining one's own assumption, belief, and judgment systems, and thinking carefully and critically about how these influence the research process" (p. 1). Therefore, reflexivity is essential to note how researchers' perspectives and beliefs may expand or even constrain what they have come to understand about their study (Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). The following is the researcher's reflexivity statement.

My family immigrated to the United States in the early 1970s. Initially, our living situation involved constantly moving from one confined apartment to another. As a young boy who recently arrived in the United States, everything I experienced was normal, but upon reflection, I realized we were not exactly living in poverty, but we were certainly poor. One Christmas morning, my parents opened the front door, and hanging on the doorknob was a plastic bag with small toys and stuffed animals. I remember not caring about anything except playing with the toys. Later in life, when I served as a community volunteer in high school, our group was tasked to gather donated toys, stuffed animals, and canned foods to distribute among underprivileged families. We were driven to certain neighborhoods and left one bag of collected items for each home or apartment door. That was the moment I realized how disadvantaged we were.

As my parents secured jobs, we were able to purchase a house. Usually, purchasing a house is considered socioeconomic progress; however, the dwelling was very dilapidated. The previous owners had abandoned the home and left all their belongings. The debris and dust were evidence that the house had remained vacant for a long time. Cleaning took many weeks, and I recall my parents using everything left behind to furnish the home, including the beds. Improving the exterior of the property took my parents many years, which exhausted their savings, and they accrued debt.

After graduating high school, I attended a community college for 2 years, transferred to a university, and earned a Bachelor of Architecture degree. My plans to pursue a master's degree in architecture would be realized later in my career. I returned home, secured a position in a prominent architectural firm, and continued working there for 10 years. The architectural field provided the opportunity for me to work on upscale residential and commercial projects for very

wealthy clients. I would visit the projects at every stage during and after construction. Experiencing the level of our clients' affluence displayed in the projects we designed was the opposite spectrum of my early life experiences.

When I transitioned from the field of architecture to a career in higher education, I witnessed again the many struggles of community college students. As a faculty member, my goal was to share my knowledge and help my students reach their aspirations to succeed. Sometimes, that involved mentoring students in life decisions, fostering their educational plans, and motivating them to reach their full potential as professionals.

Limitations

Limitations are situations or specific aspects of a study over which the researcher has little to no control and may influence the results or the researcher's capability to generalize the outcomes (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). One limitation was the emergence and duration of the COVID-19 global pandemic, which delayed this study for 2.5 years. Next, the fear of scrutiny and social indignity discourage individuals from publicly acknowledging housing insecurity or homelessness (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017). Therefore, upon the return of college staff and students on campus, encouraging individuals who experience HIH to participate in the study further delayed data collection. Finally, the transferability of knowledge gained from interviewing community college students experiencing HIH to inform how college students in general experience this phenomenon in a university environment may be limited. Because the study was conducted on housing insecure and homeless community college students, conditions of educational access and financial aid processes are different.

Summary

Chapter 3 reviewed the purpose of the study, research questions, and theoretical and conceptual frameworks. The chapter described the research design, study setting, study participants, instrumentation, the data collection process, data sources, and data analysis. Chapter 3 concluded with achieving study quality, ethical considerations, the reflexivity statement, and the study's limitations. Chapter 4 reports the analysis of the data collected and presents the findings from the study. Chapter 5 reflects on the findings and implications and offers recommendations for further research.

Chapter 4 - Research Findings and Analysis

This chapter presents an analysis of collected data and research findings from interviews with housing insecure and homeless students. The chapter begins with the description of the participant demographics. Next, the findings of the study are identified followed by the chapter summary.

Participant Demographics

The seven participants in this study attended a southern California community college and included four students who self-identified as housing insecure, and three students who self-identified as homeless. The four male and three female participants ranged in age from 19–65 years old and were from different ethnicities, including Hispanic/Latino, African American, and White. The researcher was unsuccessful in identifying participants from other ethnicities willing to be interviewed. The number of semesters participants attended college at the time of their interview varied from 1 to 6 semesters and all participants attended college as part-time students. Additionally, three of the study participants aspired to earn a certificate of completion and four study participants aspired to earn associate degrees. Table 4.1 provides a general overview of the seven participants who qualified for the study.

Table 4.1

Overview of Participant Demographics

Participant	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Residence status	Semesters enrolled	Educational aspiration	FT/PT
P1	44	Male	Hispanic/Latino	Homeless	6	Architecture associate degree	PT
P2	27	Female	Hispanic/Latino	Housing insecure	5	EMT certificate of completion	PT

P3	56	Female	White	Homeless	1	Automotive certificate of completion	PT
P4	64	Male	African American	Housing insecure	5	Culinary arts associate degree	PT
P5	49	Male	African American	Housing insecure	2	HVAC certificate of completion	PT
P6	65	Female	Hispanic/ Latino	Homeless	3	Business associate degree	PT
P7	19	Male	Hispanic/ Latino	Housing insecure	2	Business associate degree	PT

Findings

During the interviews, participants shared personal experiences throughout their lives. They described the challenges they encountered at a young age and explained how those challenges evolved to adulthood when pursuing higher education. Through the iterative data analysis process, five themes were identified: (a) Traumatic Experiences, (b) Anxiety and Distress, (c) Matriculation Restriction, (d) Delay of Higher Education, and (e) Resiliency.

Theme 1: Traumatic Experiences

Housing insecure and homeless college students encountered early traumatic events and experiences that influenced their lives. Often, an initial traumatic event led to a series of subsequent traumatic incidents. The categories identified for this theme include family circumstances, experiencing abuse, exposure to violence, and near-death occurrences.

Family Circumstances

Throughout the interviews, participants explained that growing up alone or with a family that had limited financial resources impacted the way they lived when they transitioned into adulthood. Participant 1 stated, “When I reached middle school, the situation remained exactly

the same. I was all on my own, seeking some little money to survive on my own. Nothing has changed.” Participant 3 stated, “I grew up in a really small town, and we were really poor. We lived in what we called Welfare Square, which is low-income housing. We lived with my mom. My dad wasn’t there. My dad was in prison.” Participant 5 said:

We weren’t well off, you know, we always struggled financially, so I was always used to living and sharing rooms with my siblings throughout my whole life, sharing clothes, getting hand-me-downs. . . . I didn’t have the flashiest clothes, the new shoes. I didn’t even—I was lucky if I even had clean clothes sometimes or clean shoes.

In cases of participants who experienced early financial insecurity, their situation in adulthood evolved into their experience with housing insecurity or homelessness. Participant 1 stated, “Securing housing has been one of the biggest, maybe the biggest problem during the time I have been here in America. It has never been easy or simple just to find a place. It [homelessness] has been a challenge.” Participant 2 stated:

I think that’s one of the biggest things I connected with because not having a perfect home or family life. I went from a two-bedroom trailer where it was me, my three siblings, and my mom in one little bedroom to moving to apartments here and there, always moving, and never having just one place to stay and call home.

Participant 3 explained:

At that point, I was kind of unstable because I had walked away from everything, and I was staying with my mom for a while. . . . I ended up homeless. I didn’t know what to do at that point. So, I ended up staying with family and that didn’t work out. . . . I’m in a homeless shelter right now, trying to put everything together.

Participant 5 said, “At that point in my life, I would stay on people’s couches sometimes or sometimes even just sleep in the car, just do whatever I have to do to get by.”

Throughout the interviews, participants explained how their experience with the divorce of their parents altered the family dynamics and eventually influenced the trajectory of the participants’ lives. Participant 4 stated:

They divorced eventually and that tore me up for a number of years. . . . I get back here when my folks divorced and that put me into a slump. I go to high school, and I just wasn’t making the grade . . . somewhere in the process, I just sort of began to pull away. . . . Anyways, I dropped out and worked on the pipeline in Alaska for about 6 years.

Participant 5 explained he earned very good grades in elementary and middle school, but when he reached high school, the situation changed. Participant 5 said, “My parents separated like I said, when I was in high school. . . . I saw that it [the separation] affected my mom and my younger siblings, so that always had an influence on my life as well.” Participant 6 experienced a normal upbringing with supportive parents who encouraged and incentivized her to receive good grades in school. The situation changed when her parents divorced and caused turmoil in the family structure. Participant 6 recalled:

I did not finish high school. My parents got a divorce and that’s when the problems began. . . . See what happens when a family is divorced, and two people go two different ways, and they build their own lives with drama in them. The children are the ones that pay for the parents’ mistake. You just lose focus.

Participants experienced parenthood at a young age, which inevitably influenced their lives. Participant 3 was forced to drop out of high school because of early-age parenthood. Participant 3 stated:

I went to school, but I got pregnant at 16 years old . . . at that point, I couldn't go to school no more. I was trying to finish, but I couldn't. I was sick all the way through my pregnancy. So, I ended up having three babies close together and I was by myself. . . . I ended up getting in trouble, and I ended up losing my kids.

Participant 5 eventually dropped out of high school because he felt the responsibility of becoming a parent. Participant 5 explained, "I had kids at an early age. Before I finished high school, I had my first kids so that really kind of pushed me in the direction of finding some way to support them."

Experiencing Abuse

Throughout the interviews, participants explained the traumatic abuse they experienced at a young age. One participant shared enduring sexual abuse and the experience of transitioning into the foster care system. Participant 2 stated:

It would just be me and him in the room, and then he would sexually assault me. So, it [the sexual abuse] wasn't until I started my, my grades started getting lower in school . . . I started to really escape from home . . . then once I got into the foster care system, all of that changed because school life just wasn't the same anymore. I couldn't concentrate just because that turn of events of being taken away from everything that you knew because of this incident.

Participants suffered physical abuse during childhood. Participant 4 said, "Battery trauma definitely had an effect on my confidence going to elementary and high school." Participant 6 described, "I went through physical abuse, and I went through a lot of stuff, and so I ended up going through a domestic violence shelter."

Exposure to Violence

Participants recalled childhood memories of violence and crime. Participant 1 explained:

There have been a lot of life events, mostly danger, insecurity like violence from my place, my childhood, my teen years . . . I never saw peace or like being in a peaceful place . . . insecurity of all sorts, but mainly from crime.

One participant's troubled past was caused by choosing to be associated with the wrong people, leading to increased delinquent behavior, and eventually dropping out of school completely.

Participant 5 stated:

When I got to high school, I kind of started hanging out with the wrong people . . . I used to get into fights . . . I actually ended up not graduating from high school. . . . I tried to continue my education in a continuation school, but that didn't work either. I ended up getting into trouble there too.

Another participant explained the effect of hearing the news of several family members who were murdered during different times in his childhood. Participant 7 explained:

I remember being in kindergarten when one of my cousins on my mom's side got killed . . . then one of my uncles dies . . . I was like 16 . . . they knocked on his door, he opened it, he saw they had guns, he closed it, but they shot through the door. They hit [shot] him, and they also hit [shot] my little cousin.

Near Death Occurrences

Participants nearly died from health issues, self-infliction, or harm from others throughout their lives. Participant 4 explained, "I suffered a stroke and from that point forward rather, it made everything I did in life, much more difficult." Participant 2 recalled:

I attempted suicide and I was bleeding and all this. That was the last time I saw my mom. I was taken by fire (personnel), and they cleaned me up, and took me to the hospital.

When I was in the hospital, they told me, “Your mom lost custody of you, so we’re taking you to a mental hospital on a 5150 hold.”

Participants experienced harm inflicted on them by others. Participant 3 said:

I was almost killed in 2006. I went through a lot of stuff behind that. It took a lot of counseling and stuff like that. I had to get help. I can’t say I processed it. You don’t really get over something like that.

Finally, Participant 5 said, “I’ve been in many occasions where you know, I’ve almost lost my life . . . where that’s kind of influenced me to change my ways.” As the interviews progressed, the participants transitioned and shared specific details of their HIH experience as college students.

Theme 2: Anxiety and Distress

Housing insecure and homeless college students exhibited symptoms of anxiety and distress. Participants explained that their daily life was stressful and a constant challenge. Throughout the interviews, participants expressed that constantly moving, working while attending college, and trying to find places to sleep was physically and emotionally exhausting. The categories identified for this theme include restlessness, unsafe conditions, abrupt transitions, and physical and emotional discomfort.

Abrupt Transitions

Throughout the interviews, participants recalled the abrupt transition of their experience with HIH. Participant 2 explained:

Right after I turned 18, I aged out of foster youth . . . it’s different going from 17 to, oh, you’re 18. Okay, now you have to live on your own, you have to have a car, you need to have credit.

For another participant, the experience of HIH was sudden after an argument with his parents forced him to leave the house. Participant 7 recalled, “I take a few of my stuff, I take some work clothes, I take some clothes to wear out you know, and yeah, I just leave. . . . I booked three nights at Motel 6.” The same participant continued to describe the situation after leaving the motel in an attempt of finding shelter. Participant 7 said, “The room isn’t anything out of this world. Like it’s still plywood and pieces of wood because it’s still being put together. It’s got a bed and little cabinets.”

Restlessness

Participant 1 said, “I never had little peace or plenty of space to move around, to be by my own, to have a little peace.” Participant 2 stated:

I was in transitional housing and then going to school at the same time, and then also working. I was putting too much on myself, especially that first year because I was a full-time student with over 15 credits and going to work.

The same participant explained, “I was working over 30 hours a week because I would just pick up as many shifts as I could because I had to pay utilities and extra school expenses.” Finally, Participant 4 described the experience of moving from one undesirable place to another.

Participant 4 said, “I couldn’t move into a room because all the rooms were taken, so I slept on the couch with all my belongings behind the couch.” In another situation, Participant 4 stated:

I moved into this trailer. I was feeling a little better, but not myself at all. . . . I’m still basically homeless. I’m paying the church some money to help them pay for the rent, and so, I’m not really anywhere exactly.

Unsafe Conditions

Participants described the dangerous places they lived and the situations they experienced while housing insecure or homeless. Participant 4 said, “The neighborhood I was in was a heavily gang infested neighborhood.” Additionally, the same participant continued with another circumstance, “I called my buddy at school, and he drove all my stuff up to this house, and it was a crack house.” Participant 1 explained they felt:

not only insecurity, but unsafe in many different ways. I remember another place where there was a shooting while me staying, being inside of there. . . . even life threats, like a couple of times, because of outlaws out there. People with no feelings, just trying to take over innocent people.

Finally, Participant 7 explained, “I just have to move some stuff, like sleep over probably like in the car.”

Physical and Emotional Discomfort

Participants’ experience with HHI caused physical and emotional strain. Participant 1 said, “I was feeling in my heart that I was maybe even going to struggle.” Participant 2 expressed, “So I didn’t really have a good place to you know, I don’t have to pay rent or anything, but it’s not my home, and I still felt like an outsider.” Participant 2 continued and explained:

Your first priority is I need somewhere to sleep tonight . . . especially with COVID. It [the situation] got so bad because you couldn’t even work at that time, everyone lost their jobs . . . I need to survive in this modern world of having a place to stay and you know, am I eating tonight?

Finally, Participant 4 expressed the situation simply and said, “Well, you know when you’re homeless, you are counting days and stuff, but it’s a little, little more critical.”

Theme 3: Matriculation Restriction

Participants' experience with HHH was discovered to impede the college matriculation process. The categories identified for this theme include (a) limited financial means, (b) unfavorable living conditions, and (c) complicates financial aid process.

Limited Financial Means

Throughout the interviews, participants expressed their financial hardship to pay for college and highlighted their adverse living conditions. Participant 2 stated:

It was really hard during that time to like, "where am I even going to get the money and then stimulus check for like, "yeah, we'll give you money," but it's like, "when? how much?" This isn't even enough to cover all my expenses and then trying to go to school at the same time.

For another participant, the struggle to live undocumented without support of any kind was captured in several statements. Participant 1 explained, "I psychologically started preparing myself for the journey, which was going to be economically tough for me." In another statement, the same participant said, "I had no support, not even now, no support of any kind."

Unfavorable Living Conditions

For other participants, HHH provided realization of their unfavorable living situation. Participant 1 commented:

It has always been hard for me, also because of them, my living places . . . I cannot call any of those places where I have to stay, I cannot call them like home. Just something like, just a corner where to stand, where to, to be and say that, at least I have a place to stay.

Participant 3 said, “I think it’s a little bit harder for us, when we are already experiencing a lot of stuff outside of wanting to come to school, do classes, and you know, grow.” Finally, for Participant 4, the simple statement, “I was still ostensibly homeless” resonated loudly.

Complicates Financial Aid Process

Participants who experienced HHI expressed the confusion they encountered with the financial aid process. One participant discussed the lack of support from the financial aid office. Participant 1 stated, “What was making me feel down was the situation, mostly the experiences I was having with different people and places. Instead of offering at least moral support, it was all the contrary.” Participant 2 said, “My financial aid didn’t cover (extra school expenses), which I did get a pretty good amount, but it was whenever you got it, it wasn’t right there and then when you need it.” For another participant, the financial aid process was convoluted and time-consuming. Participant 3 stated:

It kind of felt like I was going in circles because everything I did, it seemed like I had to do two or three times, and call and say, “Hey you know, I tried to do this or that,” and that didn’t work out, or you know, get help, to show me how to do the application and financial aid, and all that stuff.

Theme 4: Delay of Higher Education

Housing insecure and homeless students expressed that the consequences of constant worrying about their living condition resulted in the inability to focus on coursework and often disrupted attainment of a certificate or degree. The categories identified for this theme include (a) increases financial obligations, (b) increases stress, (c) decreases focus on learning, (d) decreases credit enrollment, and (e) delays completion time to graduate.

Increases Financial Obligations

Participants' financial obligations for school and the cost of a place to live reduced their emphasis on learning. Working over 30 hours a week to pay utility costs and personal bills became a priority over education. Participant 2 explained, "Just the money wise of having to work because my priority was, I need to pay my bills on time and so school always came second."

Increases Stress

Subsequently, allocating more time for work adversely impacted their coursework. Participant 2 stated:

I'm the type of person who, when they do something, I really try to finish it, but then when I know I have all these other things to do, I do a little of everything and then my brain is like (grunting sound), and I stress myself out so much.

Decreases Focus on Learning

HIH students' focus on schoolwork is consequential to the essential requirements including shelter, food, and some form of income. Participant 5 stated, "If you're not sure where you're sleeping that night, sometimes you might be concerned about other things rather than you know, the work you have to do for school." Participant 5 continued and said, "You're sitting there trying to concentrate on doing your work, and so it [experiencing HIH] does have an effect on you." Participant 2 explained:

I always tried to, you know, get my assignments done on time and focus on them and give them my 100%, but when you have those other first priorities in school becoming second, my grades, you know, my grades failed. I couldn't get those assignments in on time.

Decreases Credit Enrollment

With many distractions and added obligations associated with HIH, participants would often enroll in a reduced number of units. Participant 6 said, “I would take one class, and then that was it.” Participant 2 stated, “So that second semester, I didn’t do as many credits. I was part time. I tried to get my homework in on time, my assignments done, but it was just a tough situation.”

Delays Completion Time to Graduate

Eventually, the experience with HIH impacted the time required for participants to earn a certificate or an associate degree. Participant 5 said, “I could have sped up and finished things quicker if I was able to you know, have a stable place to sit and study . . . I don’t know, it could have had something to play in my progress.” Participant 6 stated, “I’ve always been chasing it, and just didn’t make time for it.”

Theme 5: Resiliency

During the interviews, participants shared their experiences of HIH. They demonstrated resilience by taking care of themselves and being accountable for their circumstances. Many used their education as a central focus to move forward and employed various strategies to succeed in fulfilling their obligations. The categories identified for this theme include (a) independent, (b) responsible, (c) priority, (d) motivation, (e) resourceful, and (f) increased commitment.

Independent

Participants functioned well on their own. Participant 2 said, “I kind of was really hard on myself, on having to do everything on my own, and be like this independent person.” The same participant explained:

It [independence] did give me the opportunity to save money, build my credit, prepare me to be an adult . . . where I had to figure it out all on my own . . . I feel like I've always been an independent person to make my own decisions.

Another participant expressed satisfaction when accomplishing tasks independently. Participant 1 stated, "Nobody was able to give me any directions though, it all came from myself to search for it, and somehow, I did it!" Participant 3 described living independently, saying:

I'm living in a homeless shelter right now and I'm hoping to save money while I'm there. I'm hoping that I can get in permanent housing, low-income housing, or something. . . . I'm in my 50s so you know, it's time to get settled down and get my life together and get stable.

Responsible

Participants were accountable to themselves and others. Participant 2 said, "It's a big responsibility, especially when you're new to it [living independent] and you don't know a lot about it [living independent]." Participant 5 stated:

My concern was making sure that my kids were taken care of first, so I made sure that they had a roof over their heads, but sometimes that would mean that I had to go find somewhere to stay on my own.

Lastly, Participant 7 simply stated, "I keep going to work and I keep going to school."

Priority

Participants set priorities for survival, education, and other needs. Participant 1 said, "I decided not to give up for my education." Participant 2 explained:

I need to have electricity, gas, and go to school. You need the internet so that you can get your assignments in on time, or you can get them in at all because some classes are all

digital. When we went into COVID time, there were Zoom classes and presentations on there and assignments on there.

Finally, Participant 2 continued and described, “That first priority, priority that survival instinct is, you know I needed.”

Motivation

Participants’ experience with HHH provided the motivational drive when accessing the college they were currently attending. Throughout the interviews, participants expressed how their living situation incentivized gaining access to college. Participant 4 said, “For me, it all boiled down to motivation. I wanted to be there. I wouldn’t allow for a barrier.” The same participant continued to explain, “I would have met curriculum tuition requirements, to sit in those classes, so it really boiled down to motivation.” Participant 3 stated:

I want to take classes that will better me, and better my life, and quality . . . it’s just getting up, being dedicated every day, to do homework, make time to do homework, make time to go to my classes.

Similarly, Participant 1 said, “I promised myself that, I’ll keep trying hard until something different is set to happen in my life.” Lastly, Participant 6 exclaimed, “You got to be proactive for sure, just push yourself out that door!”

Resourceful

Participants used their experiences with HHH to develop practical solutions for overcoming challenges when accessing their current college. Participant 4 claimed:

With [electronic benefit transfer] and food support, and other resources, I was still able to eat and shop for groceries and whatnot. . . . Between the transfer and the bus pass, I was able to get a cell phone. . . . If you want to go to school or at least earn an associate

[degree], or community college, I just don't think that the cost per credit hour is a deterrent.

The same participant said, "I could panhandle the money. Of course, I didn't have to, but if push came to shove, I would have panhandled that money in a week's time." Participant 6 stated, "I believe that if you have all the basic needs, you are going to make it." The same participant made additional comments such as "no barrier at all," "the doors are open," and "the college gave me everything I needed." A participant discussed the struggles of having no transportation, and the satisfaction of finding a solution. Participant 4 explained, "I started to take on the accounting curriculum, and so I took the bus there and took the bus back." Similarly, Participant 2 explained "I was living with my boyfriend's family at the time. I would wake up at 4:00 am to go to work, and he would drop me off to school."

Increased Commitment

Participants' experience with HHH was discovered to increase their level of commitment to progress in higher education. Throughout the interviews, participants expressed their dedication and willingness to continue enrolling and attending college courses despite their living condition. Participant 1 said, "I'm willing to keep going with college no matter what happens or what kind of situation . . . my intention is to go farther as much as I can." Participant 1 continued and said, "I'm really willing to keep going as much as I can despite that I know that it's tough for me financially." Participant 7 claimed, "It [HHH] hasn't swayed me from not going to college." Participant 3 stated, "I just think that it's a goal and I have to keep it in mind that it's real important to me and my life . . . it just takes you being dedicated to it and really wanting it."

Chapter Summary

Chapter 4 provided a review of participant demographics. Additionally, the findings of the study were identified as themes displaying categories supported by direct quotes from the participants' descriptions of their experiences. The themes included (a) Traumatic Experiences, (b) Anxiety and Distress, (c) Matriculation Restriction, (d) Delay of Higher Education, and (e) Resiliency.

Chapter 5 - Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Chapter 5 provides an overview of the problem, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. Then, the findings of this study were organized by themes arranged under the study's research questions. Additionally, discussion and findings related to the literature were presented based on themes from the study. Finally, a discussion related to the conceptual framework, implications related to practice, future research recommendations, and a summary concludes Chapter 5.

Overview of the Problem

Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) found community college students are at a higher risk of experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness (HIH) compared to students attending 4-year institutions. Dukes (2013) suggested some housing insecure and homeless individuals who are college-bound have experienced low socioeconomic status, family and precollegiate education instability, harsh living conditions, and minimal support and encouragement along the path to college enrollment. Additionally, a substantial number of housing insecure and homeless individuals experience the phenomenon before and during the application process, and while attending higher education (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students before, during, and after admission to a southern California community college. The study aimed to illuminate the experiences that influenced the students' access to higher education and academic persistence.

Research Questions

The research questions (RQs) guiding this study were:

RQ 1. What are the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students at a southern California community college?

RQ 2. In what ways do housing insecurity and homelessness influence college access to a southern California community college?

RQ 3. In what ways do housing insecurity and homelessness influence academic persistence at a southern California community college?

Discussion of Findings Related to Research Questions

In the following section, the findings of this study were organized by themes arranged under the study's research questions.

Research Question 1

The first research question of this study was: "What are the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students at a southern California community college?" The themes that addressed participants' experiences were Traumatic Experiences, Anxiety and Distress, and Resiliency.

Traumatic Experiences

The analysis of transcripts revealed participants encountered various forms of trauma during childhood and adolescence, which adversely impacted their housing insecurity and experiences of homelessness in adulthood. Principal components of the participants' family environment played a significant role in these traumatic experiences and were interconnected. Financial insecurity was a significant challenge faced by all participants who came from various backgrounds, including low socioeconomic status and poverty. Participants recalled living in low-income housing in less desirable parts of town. They often shared rooms with siblings and

wore second-hand clothes and shoes. One participant even claimed that wearing dirty clothes was frequently their only option.

For five participants, their parents' divorce during their secondary education was a traumatic circumstance resulting in the breakdown of the family structure. Participants reflected on the heightened family drama and the adverse impact on themselves, their parents, and their siblings resulting from the separation. They recalled issues at school (e.g., failing grades, increasing conflicts) became more common. Ultimately, these challenges played a significant role in the participants' decision to drop out of high school. Consequently, participants left their family units, leading to HIH.

Participants shared their experiences of sexual and physical abuse as significant traumatic events in their lives. One individual described a traumatic experience of sexual abuse that began in middle school and continued through high school. As a result of this abuse, the participant was removed from the family home and assigned to a foster home. This ordeal negatively impacted the participant's ability to focus on schoolwork, ultimately leading to dropping out of high school. Once the participant aged out of the foster care system, finding housing and a means of making money became top priorities. Two participants shared their experiences with physical abuse during childhood. One participant was physically abused by their father, and another participant was abused by a spouse. In both cases, these traumatic experiences forced them to leave high school and their families, resulting in lives afflicted by HIH.

Participants reflected on various forms of violence they experienced during childhood. One participant described witnessing drug deals and shootings, emphasizing the impact of growing up in a dangerous environment. The participant noted heavy police presence and frequent helicopter surveillance were common in their neighborhood. Another participant shared

several family members had been murder victims, which significantly affected the participant's life.

Finally, participants shared near-death experiences during their childhood significantly impacted their lives. One participant noted attempting suicide resulting from experiences of sexual abuse was a pivotal point in their childhood. One participant explained that being associated with the wrong people during high school often caused the participant to get involved in life-threatening physical altercations with adverse consequences. Another participant revealed the trauma of suffering physical abuse in a failed marriage when the situation nearly became fatal was the pivotal point in the participant's life.

Anxiety and Distress

The abrupt transition from living in a stable environment to facing HIH caused anxiety and distress among the participants. Five participants experienced HIH after leaving their homes due to their parents' divorce. One participant aged out of the foster care system and needed to live independently, and parents forced another participant out of the house after an ensuing argument.

Maintaining stable living conditions and securing a steady income while attending college caused ongoing anxiety and distress for participants. HIH are inherently traumatic experiences. Participants frequently experienced restlessness constantly moving from one place to another, occasionally staying with family members or friends on couches, sleeping in cars, staying in transitional houses, sleeping in motel rooms, or temporarily residing in homeless shelters. Often, the places where participants stayed were unsafe. One participant described living in a crack house in a gang-infested neighborhood. Another participant shared the experience of living in crime areas where shootings were common occurrences.

Resiliency

Interview data revealed participants who experienced housing insecurity or homelessness often faced various forms of trauma, anxiety, and distress; however, many noted having lived independently for most of their lives helped them manage challenges such as securing funds for expenses, finding transportation, locating housing, and balancing school responsibilities. The participants expressed a strong sense of accountability, motivating them to continue progressing in their daily lives, which included work, school, and other personal responsibilities. They prioritized essential areas such as securing stable housing, maintaining employment, paying bills, supporting family members, and attending college.

Research Question 2

The second research question of this study was: In what ways do HIH influence college access to a southern California community college? The themes that addressed participants' college access experiences were Matriculation Restriction and Resiliency.

Matriculation Restriction

The analysis of transcripts showed participants who were housing insecure or homeless faced numerous challenges when attempting to access college. They reported the lack of financial and emotional support, arduous living conditions, and an intricate financial aid process often discouraged them from registering and enrolling. Without family or other support systems, participants struggled to find funding for tuition and other financial obligations. They often explored various options to cover these costs, including financial aid, employment, and federally subsidized assistance.

Another challenge participants faced when trying to enroll in college was their complicated living conditions. Participants experienced unstable housing situations, which

included frequently moving, sleeping on couches, living in dilapidated trailers, motels, cars, shared rooms, transitional homes, and homeless shelters. Living under those conditions made enrolling in school difficult. Participants noted securing stable housing was often their primary concern before pursuing higher education.

Participants who experienced HIH found the financial aid process confusing. One participant with undocumented status attempted to apply for financial aid but struggled to understand many parts of the application form and did not receive the necessary support from the financial aid office. Another participant received financial aid, but the date of the award was unclear, and the arrival date of the check was too late to cover tuition and other financial obligations. Additionally, a participant applying for financial aid faced delays due to unresolved past due student loans. Consequently, the aid was received at the end of the semester, forcing the participant to urgently seek alternative ways to cover tuition and other financial obligations.

Resiliency

Interview data indicated experiences with HIH were significant motivating factors and increased the participants' resourcefulness. For five nontraditional participants, their experiences with HIH throughout their lives motivated them to attend college and secure a better future. Participants were unwilling to allow their unstable housing situation to prevent them from getting up in the morning, preparing for their daily routine, finding transportation, and attending higher education.

Participants used their experiences with HIH to resolve challenges during the process of accessing their current college. Transportation to campus was often a barrier. Participants would use public transportation, get a ride from friends, or walk to school. Tuition cost was a significant challenge preventing college access. Participants often worked to afford tuition cost

or relied on the free-college program offered by the institution. One participant mentioned panhandling as a last resort option to pay for tuition. Finally, attending college while managing various financial obligations (e.g., cell phone bills, rent, food, utilities, other daily expenses) often proved to be challenging. Participants frequently worked overtime to help cover rent, utilities, and essential living costs. Additionally, participants used food support programs available on campus or an EBT card to access food.

Research Question 3

The third research question of this study was: In what ways do HIH influence academic persistence at a southern California community college? The themes that addressed participants' academic persistence experiences were Delay of Higher Education and Resiliency.

Delay of Higher Education

Analysis of the transcripts indicated experiences with HIH often impeded participants' ability to progress in college and achieve their goals of earning a certificate or degree. The instability of their housing situation, coupled with the financial burden of paying for college and other obligations, presented significant challenges for participants. Living independently without financial support proved to be difficult, leading many to work overtime to stay current with their bills. This work often distracted them from their education, resulting in concentration issues and a loss of focus on learning. Participants frequently submitted late, incomplete, or substandard assignments.

The stress from unstable housing, long work hours, academic challenges, and other responsibilities compounded their difficulties. As a result, the priority of securing stable housing and surviving independently often took precedence over their educational aspirations. Many participants chose to reduce their course loads, enrolling in only one class at a time or even

dropping out of college for a semester. Ultimately, this affected their educational progress and delayed their ability to complete their goals of earning a certificate or degree.

Resiliency

Interview data revealed experiences with HHH enhanced participants' commitment to pursue and achieve success in college. Participants were committed to taking an active role in their education and persevering despite any challenges they encountered. They remained focused on their goals and were determined to earn a certificate or degree to enhance their prospects.

Discussion of Findings Related to Literature

In the following section, the themes are discussed in relation to the existing literature on housing insecure and homeless students.

Theme 1: Traumatic Experiences

Participants often encountered a variety of traumatic experiences during their childhood. Family circumstances played an essential role in the lives of the participants. Living as a member of a family with low socioeconomic status transcended into the participants' HHH situation. Participants described how financial insecurity adversely affected their living situation with the scarcity of food available, the frayed clothes they wore, and the dilapidated places they called home. These findings were supported by Hallett and Crutchfield (2017), who found living in poverty is a leading factor of persistent HHH, which can be traumatizing especially when a student lacks the support system from family, friends, or community.

Another traumatic factor associated with living in adverse situations includes the exposure to violence. The participants experienced several forms of violent occurrences during their childhood including enduring physical abuse, sexual abuse, and physical altercations, and exposure to drug-related crimes, shootings, and murders. These findings were supported by

Hallett and Crutchfield (2017), who described this type of trauma as a severe, intense, and prolonged reaction to an event void of the support necessary to achieve normal emotional stability.

The experience of parental divorce was also traumatic for participants. D’Onofrio and Emery (2019) found “parental divorce/separation is associated with an increased risk for child and adolescent adjustment problems, including academic difficulties (e.g., lower grades and school dropout), disruptive behaviors (e.g., conduct and substance use problems), and depressed mood” (p. 100). These results aligned with findings from participants who explained the separation of their parents was so devastating to the family structure that each participant who experienced parental divorce also dropped out of high school and descended into a life of HIH.

Although each participants’ experiences of traumatic events varied, the common factor was the lack of family or societal support. These finding were supported by Dukes (2013), who found college-bound students experiencing HIH have endured extreme financial insecurity, family and educational instability, inadequate living arrangements, and the absence of adult support and encouragement along the path to college enrollment.

Theme 2: Anxiety and Distress

Trauma experienced in childhood had direct consequences on participants’ housing insecure and homeless situations as adults. Participants experienced all levels of anxiety and distress, although for some participants, the experience had a more profound impact. HIH prompted other adverse circumstances for the participants including experiences of (a) restlessness, constantly moving and living in unsafe conditions; (b) managing school, work, and paying bills; (c) encountering abrupt transitions; and (d) physical and emotional discomfort. Researchers have contended the compounding obstacles that many housing insecure and

homeless community college students encounter include stress, isolation, challenges with financial aid, insufficient access to technology, complicated choices between paying for food or rent (Ambrose, 2016; Gupton, 2017; Vasquez et al., 2019). These findings were further supported by Hallett and Crutchfield (2017), who noted individuals can have different responses, but for some, the trauma of HIH can have extensive impacts including feeling depressed, unsafe, isolated, and helpless.

Participants in this study encountered challenges related to financial aid and faced difficult choices between paying for food and rent. However, access to technology was not reported as a problem. Many participants expressed feelings of anxiety about potentially revealing their housing insecurity, which led them to intentionally isolate themselves from faculty, peers, and extracurricular activities. The distress experienced by these participants aligns with the extensive impacts described by Hallett and Crutchfield (2017), indicating individuals facing housing insecurity often experience depression, insecurity, isolation, and helplessness.

Theme 3: Matriculation Restriction

For participants, accessing higher education was directly impacted by the financial aid application process. Participants described the process as discouraging because of specific questions on the application forms requiring their physical address or contact information, which they often could not provide. Additionally, the waiting period to receive financial aid funding often extended beyond the start of the semester and caused participants to be dropped from courses leaving them in a difficult situation and frustrated.

Despite the financial aid challenges faced by participants, several indirect obstacles limited their access to college. The findings of this study indicate that the majority of participants were nontraditional students who had dropped out of secondary school due to various

circumstances experienced during childhood, including physical abuse, sexual abuse, and parental divorce. Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) stated, “An important aspect of access to postsecondary education involves academic preparation. Students who experience homelessness tend to have lower academic outcomes compared to their stably housed peers. The lower the high school graduation rates likely influence access to college” (p. 38). In contrast, this study's findings highlighted the specific reasons behind the participants' withdrawal from secondary education, which significantly affected their access to college.

Moreover, the participants' housing insecurity and homeless status presented other issues. Participants explained their limited financial ability to pay for transportation, rent, utilities, and personal bills often outweighed paying for tuition and other costs associated with higher education. Participants worked extra hours to pay for tuition and textbooks, or they would wait for the next semester to register for classes often prolonging the start of their education.

Finally, participants described living in adverse conditions, which often involved sleeping in their cars, on a friend's or relative's couch, with multiple individuals in substandard locations, in unsafe conditions, or on the streets. Participants explained that living under those circumstances negatively affected their decision to enroll in higher education. These findings were supported by Hallett and Freas (2018), who noted higher learning institutions “should intentionally acknowledge that the experiences of students often influence how they access education” (p. 727).

Theme 4: Delay of Higher Education

Study participants explained that continuous enrollment in college was an emotionally and financially daunting responsibility. Participants expressed difficulty in (a) managing their living conditions, (b) balancing work and school, (c) paying for personal bills, and (d) focusing

on schoolwork. Participants stated the constant stress of living housing insecure and homeless and working extra hours to remain financially solvent was not uncommon. Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) noted focus, commitment, and a sense of stability are all essential for effective learning, but the inability to meet the basic needs of food and housing disrupts the cognitive process of housing insecure and homeless students.

Moreover, participants expressed being overwhelmed with setting priorities and often digressed into survival mode; therefore, schoolwork became a second priority resulting in failed attempts to complete or pass classes often affecting enrolling in subsequent courses. According to Broton (2021), HHI affects students' academic persistence and success through various conduits, including those related to perception, health, and logistical barriers.

In each case, the time to complete courses or earn a degree was prolonged. Findings from this study were supported by researchers who explained "the long-term academic implications of housing insecurity during college have not been examined, but human development theory and empirical investigations using ethnographic and interview methods indicate that housing insecurity impedes students' academic success" (Bowers & O'Neill, 2019; Crutchfield et al., 2016; Gupton, 2017; Hallett & Freas 2018; Maslow, 1943, as cited in Broton, K., 2021, p. 19).

The study findings were aligned with the literature from Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) and Broton (2021), which stated academic persistence and success are affected by the constant experiences of housing insecure and homeless college students. Additionally, examination of the participants' interviews revealed that HHI can often delay their academic progress and success.

Theme 5: Resiliency

Theme 5 emerged unexpectedly from the findings of this study. During interviews, participants recounted experiences that was contrary to other participants' accounts regarding

HIH, college access, and academic progress in higher education. Participants indicated that the consequences of HIH heightened their independence, responsibility, and prioritization. Although living alone was difficult, managing daily tasks gave participants a stronger sense of satisfaction and empowerment. Their sense of responsibility deepened because they could rely only on themselves. Participants also became more skilled at identifying and focusing on the most essential aspects of their lives while experiencing HIH.

Some participants were motivated and considered their HIH situation to be noninfluential during the college matriculation process. These participants were not affected by the financial or emotional burden of registering and enrolling in college courses. Some participants found college resources and tuition-free programs to subsidize their tuition costs and worked to pay for living expenses. Moreover, these participants recognized that improving their life situation was the result of hard work and completing their goal of attending college to earn a certificate or degree.

For participants, like their access to higher education, HIH increased their commitment to progress and to persist in college. Participants recognized, although they had other obligations, completing a certificate or degree could provide an opportunity to improve their financial and living situation. The findings were supported by the literature, which explains that similar to their peers at 4-year institutions, housing-insecure and homeless community college students have educational interests and professional goals and regard higher education as a path to long-term economic and housing stability (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017). The following section discusses the study's themes in relation to the conceptual framework of Tinto's (1993) model of student departure.

Discussion Related to the Conceptual Framework

Tinto's (1993) model of student departure examined how preentry attributes, goals and commitments, institutional experiences, academic and social integration, and outcomes of individuals influenced their response to enter college and persist in the campus environment. The model was developed to anticipate behaviors and outcomes established by the distinctive backgrounds and attributes of students (Tinto, 1993). Several findings of this study aligned with Tinto's (1993) model of student departure.

According to Tinto's (1993) model of student departure, the decision to pursue higher education is influenced by students' preentry attributes, including family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling. Tinto (1993) explains that:

Individuals who come from families, communities, and schools whose norms and behaviors are very different from those of the communities of the college into which entry is made face especially difficult problems in seeking to achieve competent membership in the new communities. Though they may have been successful in meeting the demands of past situations, they may not have acquired the social and intellectual skills needed for successful participation in the new communities of the college. (p. 97)

Based on the findings of this study, the experiences with early childhood trauma were influential in preventing participants from attending college until later in their lives. Many of the participants experienced poverty, homelessness, early parenthood, increased delinquent behavior, violence, and parental divorce. Participants dropped out of high school and opted to work. This finding aligned with Tinto's (1993) model of student departure on the importance of family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling before accessing college.

Tinto (1993) described a component of the process of persistence in higher education as “a willingness to commit oneself to the investment of time, energy, and often scarce resources to meet the academic and social demands which institutions impose upon their students” (p. 42). When the participants were ready to access college, they were challenged with other obligations. Participants described how searching for a safe place to live was time consuming and exhausting. The participants worked many hours to pay for living expenses and save money for school. The participants expressed frustration with financial aid as a source to subsidize the cost of their education. Participants prioritized housing and financial security first, although they understood the value of higher education to their future stability. According to the participants, these external obligations were deterrents to accessing college. This finding aligned with Tinto’s (1993) model of student departure on the significance of goal and commitments for college access.

The conceptual model’s stages of institutional experiences and integration in the college environment are important for the academic progress of housing insecure and homeless students. Tinto (1993) refers to the individual facing the task of becoming integrated into the college environment as being “incorporated into the communities of the college. Having moved away from the norms and behavioral patterns of past associations, the person now faces the problem of finding and adopting new ones appropriate to the college setting” (p. 98). Participants explained that their experience with HIH compounded the challenge of attending college, completing the coursework, and working to sustain that lifestyle. The findings from this study suggested the participants’ time was consumed by their HIH situation and external obligations, which left limited time for them to experience interactions with faculty and staff, and even more limited time to socially integrate with their peers.

Finally, the conceptual model's final goals and commitments are essential stages for housing insecure and homeless students' academic progress. Tinto (1993) stated, "Without external assistance, many will eventually leave the institution because they have been unable to establish satisfying intellectual and social membership" (p. 99). Based on the findings of this study, the limited time for academic and social integration, the amount of assigned coursework, and the external commitments participants encountered were detrimental to some participants' persistence.

Practical Implications and Recommendations

When contemplating practical implications and recommendations, a common factor among the findings of this study was the trauma experienced by the participants during their childhood that persisted through their postsecondary education. Although each participant's experience in higher education varied, some study participants were able to manage the challenges of living in a housing insecure and homeless situation while navigating through college and working to make a living. The following section highlights the implications and recommendations derived from the findings.

Implementation of these strategies can also help housing insecure and homeless students during the stage in Tinto's (1993) model of student departure that promotes academic and social integration throughout their college experience. Tinto's model suggests faculty interactions are integral to students' institutional experiences. The implications include developing policy and practice to promote faculty engagement with all potential students, including housing insecure and homeless students. Strengthening connections between students and faculty can be achieved by providing outreach events at local secondary schools or arranging orientation meeting during the students' pre-entry stage. Additionally, the faculty could provide students at the outreach or

orientation event information regarding the students' program of interest including faculty contact information. Once the students are enrolled, communication between the students and the faculty could resume through periodic group meetings.

The trauma informed care model was critical in guiding some of the implications from the findings. Higher education institutions, including community colleges, have the potential to develop and implement policy promoting understanding and empathy of the experiences that HIH endure and provide support systems and resources that can help them transition through the matriculation process. Biel et al. (2014) suggested review of institutional policy and preventive measures are ways to approach homelessness intervention, and suitable housing is only a part of the equation for a comprehensive strategy to help homeless families or individuals. Another implication helps to expand the resources offered to housing insecure and homeless students by providing policy that identifies the goals and commitments of housing insecure and homeless individuals and implementing support systems and resources. Strategies include improved resource amenities, robust outreach efforts, and expanded access to mentoring programs that can provide "health care, mental health services, education and job opportunities, childcare, and an environment that promotes empowerment" (Biel et al., 2014, p. 1249).

Moreover, this study's findings suggest housing insecure and homeless students are apprehensive about revealing any information that could jeopardize their housing situation to members of the college community. The implications include developing policy to promote faculty engagement in professional development training focusing on challenges students encounter and learn strategies in counseling marginalized students, specifically individuals who experience HIH. Meeting students individually and consistently to discuss their immediate and long-term goals, intentions, and institutional and external commitments, to increase

faculty/student engagement is another positive strategy. During the individual meetings, faculty could note any external activities that interests each student and match them with a local student club on campus or introduce the students to external college partners offering a mentorship program. Typically, the role of college faculty has been promoting student learning and success; however, as this study revealed, the lives of students, their needs, and demographics have changed, therefore, the role of community college faculty is critical to meet and extend beyond those changes to fully realize student success. Through the development of policy and practice of the aforementioned strategies, higher education institutions can use the trauma informed care model to build trust, create collaborations, set goals, empower change, and support student success among all students. This study's implications include the opportunity to provide educational institutions' policies and practices that improve the engagement and retention of all students, including those who have experienced trauma. Other implications and recommendations derived from the findings are highlighted in the following section.

The McKinney-Vento Act is federal legislation providing rights, protection, guidance, support, and resources for children and youth, age 21 and under, attending elementary through secondary education who experience homelessness (Ausikaitis et al., 2015); however, the policy consists of disparities for support and guidelines required for postsecondary education. Expanding similar provisions entailing the development of a comprehensive policy suited for higher education can result in positive outcomes for college access and student success. An implication of this study includes increased awareness and informing federal policymakers to reevaluate the McKinney-Vento Act (2011) for the revision of the legislation to include postsecondary education because support “virtually disappear as students enter college” (Hallett & Freas, 2017, p. 726).

Findings described various challenges participants encountered while they experienced HIH and accessing and persisting in college. One predominant challenge common in participants' data was their inability to manage financial resources for college and other expenses. Central to the challenge of managing financial resources is the financial aid process as college access, retention, and persistence for students who experience HIH are significantly influenced by the funding. Participants exhibited symptoms of anxiety and distress from overworking, having insufficient funds to cover expenses, and sleeping in unfamiliar or unsafe places because participants lacked the financial means to pay for a permanent place to live. Participants encountered obstacles with the financial aid process that directly delayed college access and their educational persistence. The implications of this study include improving financial aid policies to streamline the process and prioritize students who experience HIH.

Participants in this study were resilient to the numerous challenges associated with HIH. They were resourceful when forced to find places to sleep and food to eat; secure transportation to school; manage paying for tuition, books, and other required course materials; and prioritize school and other external obligations. The resilient participants were seasoned individuals who were accustomed to that lifestyle from their experience with HIH. The implications include maintaining and improving current policies that provide institutional resources to students and provide new policies to expand more resources in deficient student services.

Recommendations for Future Research

Many opportunities exist for further research to inform the scholarly community and continue to reduce gaps on the topic of HIH in community colleges. Increased research and advocacy related to HIH among college students would provide additional and essential information to encourage and motivate policymakers for improvements. The following are

recommendations for further research relating to the topic of HHH based on findings from this study.

Theme 5 was unexpected and emerged from participants' data of this study. The theme contained categories suggesting the resilience and commitment of some students regarding their HHH situation as noninfluential to their educational mission and serving as motivation to persist in higher education. The first recommendation for further research includes a qualitative study to find the motivating factors that maintain housing insecure and homeless students' commitment to their educational goal and to learn about the source(s) of their resilience.

The second recommendation for further research involves a quantitative study to find nationwide data for housing insecure and homeless students based on five possible definitions for the final step (i.e., outcomes/departure decision) of Tinto's (1993) model of student departure that was vaguely defined. Kerby (2015) described Tinto's (1993) model of student departure as a "longitudinal process of interactions between academic and social systems that are continually modified by variance in the individuals" (p. 11). The researcher considered possible definitions for outcome/departure decision, including (a) students departing the institution without completing their educational goal, (b) students departing the institution with a certificate or associate degree, (c) students departing the institution with some courses completed providing them the necessary skills or knowledge to secure employment, (d) students departing the institution who intend to return to higher education, or (e) students departing the institution without planning to return to higher education.

This study used data from personal interviews of housing insecure and homeless students from different ethnicities including Hispanic and Latino, White, and Black American. Students with Asian, Native American, Native Hawaiian, and other ethnicities were not interviewed

because the study setting data for this study disclosed very low (3.7%) headcount for those ethnicities. The third recommendation for further research includes generic qualitative research of housing insecure and homeless students with Asian, Native American, Native Hawaiian, and any other ethnicity.

In this study, data revealed trauma of various levels was experienced by participants between the time they attended elementary and secondary education. Although some literature exists on the correlation between trauma and the effects on education, there is limited literature on the use of the TIC model on community college students. The fourth recommendation for further research includes a qualitative study on the implementation of the TIC process on college students who experienced or who currently experience trauma.

Summary

Studies have shown HHI has not discriminated between the lines of student demographics and affects students of every ethnicity, age, gender, gender-identity, military experience, immigration status, and socioeconomic status (Goldrick-Rab, 2019; Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017; HUD, 2015). The student population who experiences HHI across the nation has been the most marginalized and least supported, and institutions of higher learning have a responsibility to address this urgent and serious matter. Hallett and Crutchfield (2017) stated:

If colleges and universities have missions of academic success, attention to housing stability must be included to ensure that students who have the greatest need have access to the education that will assist them in attaining the opportunity to learn, grow, and gain economic stability. (p. 19)

This study highlighted the experiences of housing insecure and homeless community college students, their experience with the phenomenon, and their experience accessing and

persisting in college. Specifically, findings of this study explored some early traumatic events and experiences housing insecure and homeless students encountered and ways the phenomenon affected some students with symptoms of anxiety and distress. Additionally, some students expressed HHH was restrictive in their ability to access college, and how the phenomenon delayed their ability to continue their educational progress; however, this study also found, for some housing insecure and homeless students, their situation was not a deterrent from completing their educational mission. The themes developed from this study included (a) Traumatic Experiences, (b) Anxiety and Distress, (c) Matriculation Restriction, (d) Delay of Higher Education, and (e) Resiliency.

Chapter 5 concluded this generic qualitative research. The chapter provided the researcher's overview of the problem and reviewed the purpose of the study and research questions. Next, findings were organized by themes arranged under the study's research questions. Then, the chapter included a discussion of findings related to literature and a discussion related to the conceptual framework. The findings of this study provided practical implications and recommendations. Finally, further research on students who experience HHH were recommended.

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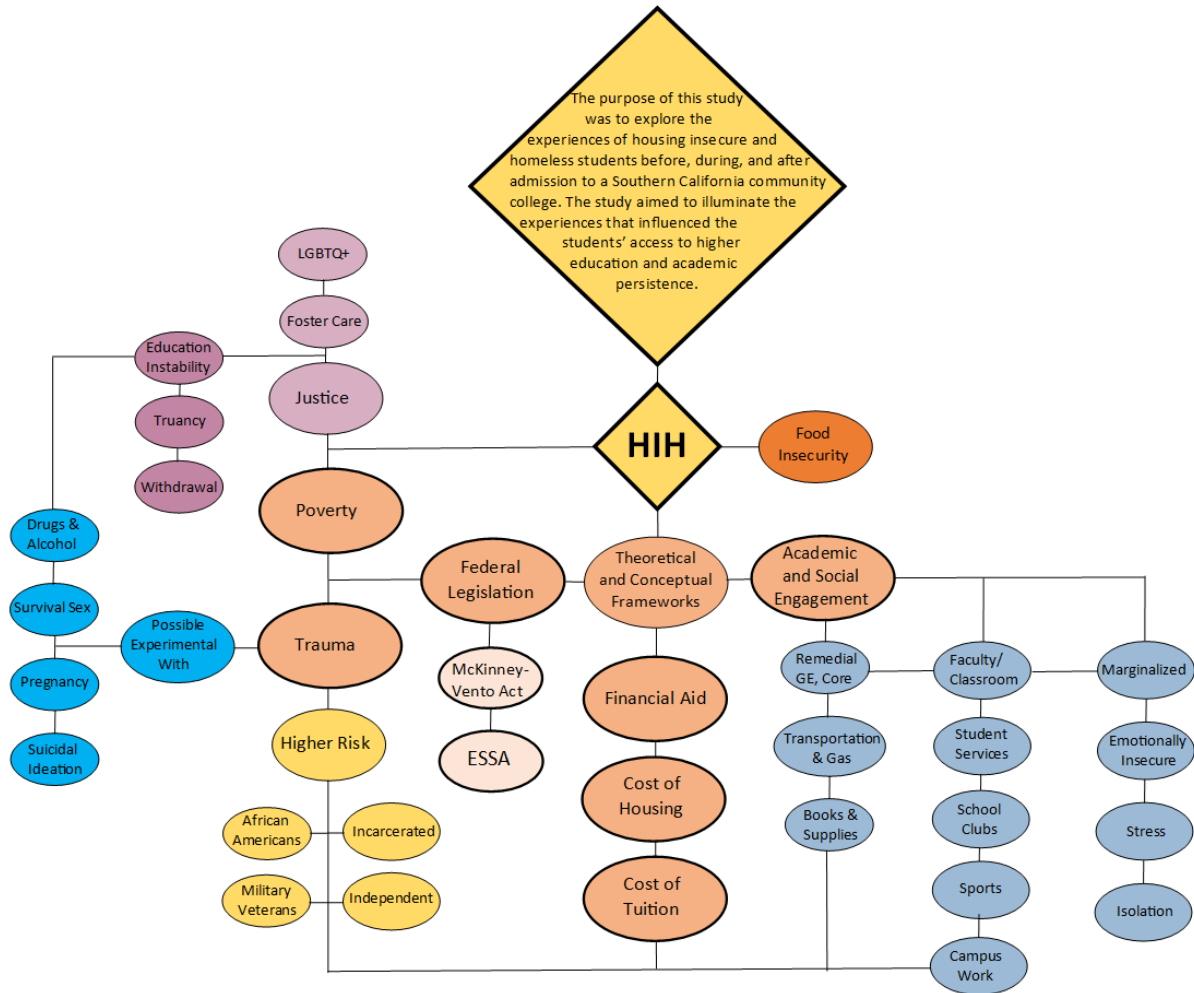
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Appendix A - Alignment Table

Literature findings	Research questions	Conceptual Framework Tinto's (1993) model of student departure	Interview questions
Dukes (2013) noted that college-bound students who experience HIH “have struggled through extreme financial hardship; residential and school instability; inadequate living arrangements; and, in the case of unaccompanied youth, lack of adult support and encouragement along the path to college enrollment” (Introduction to Section 6).	What are the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students at southern California community college?	Pre-entry Attributes	1,2,3, and 4
HUD (2015) noted, “living in poverty has a biological impact on the brain that impedes academic success, and it also presents students with difficult logistical hurdles” (p. 2). Meeting basic needs may take significant time and energy away from coursework (Hallett & Freas, 2018).	What are the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students at southern California community college?	Goals/ Commitment 1 Institutional Experiences Integration	5
Research suggests a significant number of individuals experience HIH “while preparing for, applying to, and attending postsecondary institutions” (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017, p. 23).	In what ways do HIH influence college access to a southern California community college?	Goals/ Commitment 1	6
HIH overlaps with most social issues that marginalize students and negatively impact college access, persistence, and completion, including “poverty, foster care, and LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and others) discrimination” (Hallett & Crutchfield, 2017, p. 8; HUD, 2015, p. 2).	In what ways do HIH influence academic persistence at a southern California community college?	Goals/ Commitments 2 Outcome	7
Full engagement in the educational process deteriorates because of emotional stress and isolation, and eventually, contributing to housing insecure and homeless students leaving higher education (Hallett & Freas, 2018).	In what ways do HIH influence academic persistence at a southern California community college?	Goals/ Commitments 2 Outcome	7

Appendix B - Literature Review: Thematic Framework



Appendix C - Interview Protocol

Step 1

Preinterview statement:

I want to thank you once again for being a willing participant in this interview process for my study. As a reminder, my study seeks to understand the life stories of students who experience housing insecurity and homelessness. The study also seeks to understand the experiences students encounter with college access and academic persistence in a college environment. The aim of this research is to document our dialogue, including each participant's response to the questions to find parallel experiences that will help researchers and practitioners learn more about students and housing insecurity and homelessness. This interview will be approximately 1 hour long during which I will ask you to share information about your upbringing, early education, significant turning points in your life, your decision to enroll into college, your experience applying to college, and the experience with your educational progress.

Step 2

Statement of assurance

I understand that some of the information you provide today will be personal. I have taken every precaution to keep your identity anonymous. You will have the opportunity to review the transcribed version of the interview at which time you may correct, modify, or omit anything that you are not comfortable sharing. All the participants' audio recorded interviews will be kept in a secure location and in a locked safe. If at any time during the interview you want to take a short break, please let me know. I also want to inform you that if you feel uncomfortable answering an interview question, let me know and I will continue to the next one. Finally, if at any time during the interview you do not want to continue, please let me know and we will stop.

Step 3

Review aspects of the consent form

During our correspondence, you completed an informed consent form indicating that I have permission to audio record our conversation. Are you still okay with me recording our conversation today?

Yes response: Thank you. Please inform me if at any point you want me to turn off the recorder or to omit anything you state off the record.

No response: Thank you for responding honestly. I will take only written notes of our conversation.

Step 4

Asking the participant if he/she has any questions

Before we begin the interview, do you have any questions? (Discuss questions)

If you have any other questions during the interview process or even after the interview concludes, please feel free to contact me. I would be more than happy to answer any of your questions.

Step 5

Interview Questions

The following interview questions align with the research questions and guided the researcher's study.

Research Question 1: What are the experiences of housing insecure and homeless students attending a southern California community college?

1. Please tell me about yourself, from your earliest recollection to the point before making the decision to attend college.

Follow up questions in case the topic was not covered in the previous question:

2. Please tell me more about your upbringing.
3. Please expand on your experience with elementary school, middle school, high school.
4. Please share any life event(s) you've experienced which has altered where you are today.
5. Please tell me about your experience with securing housing.

Research Question 2: In what ways do housing insecurity and homelessness influence college access to a southern California community college?

6. Please share your experience with accessing the college you currently attend.

Research Question 3: In what ways do housing insecurity and homelessness influence academic persistence at a southern California community college?

7. Please tell me about the progress you have experienced at the community college you currently attend.

Step 6

End of interview

We have reached the end of the interview process. I want to thank you again for participating in my study, and for answering the questions honestly and to the best of your ability. As we discussed, I will be providing you with a \$25 gift card for your time and effort with this study.

Please let me know the best way we can arrange for you to receive the gift card. Once completed, I will follow up with you to verify your interview and ask for feedback or comments. I also want to remind you that if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Appendix D - CITI Program Certificate



Completion Date 11-Sep-2022
Expiration Date 10-Sep-2025
Record ID 49530251

This is to certify that:

Bert Bitanga

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Not valid for renewal of
certification through CME.

Human Subjects Research (HSR)

(Curriculum Group)

IRB Researchers and personnel on IRB protocols

(Course Learner Group)

1 - Basic Course

(Stage)

Under requirements set by:

Kansas State University

CITI
Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative

Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w2d95943c-b38a-4bcc-bfc0-5e036ebff95c-49530251

Appendix E - IRB Approval Letter



TO: Margaretta Mathis
Educational Leadership
Manhattan, KS 66506

Protocol Number: IRB-10794

FROM: Lisa Rubin, Chair
Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects

DATE: 11/01/2022

RE: Approval of Your Proposal Entitled, "An uphill hurdle to education: The lived experiences of housing insecure and homeless students in a Southern California community college."

Federal regulations stipulate that human subjects protocols can be approved by IRB's for only one year, and require "continuing review" and approval to continue past the expiration date.

On the basis of the IRB "continuing review," your project is classified as follows:

Active. The activity is pending or in progress, and there have been no changes that have occurred or are contemplated that would affect the status of human subjects.

EXPIRATION DATE: 10/24/2024

If the activity persists, it will be eligible for continuing review several months prior to the new expiration date.

Electronically signed by Phill Vardiman on 11/01/2022 2:59 PM ET
On Behalf of IRB Chair

Appendix F - Notice of Cooperative Participation in Research

Office of Institutional Research

Notice of Cooperative Participation in Research that has been approved by another institution's IRB

■■■ does not currently have an IRB (Institutional Review Board) approval process. There may be instances wherein faculty wish to participate cooperatively in a research project that has been initiated at another institution and approved by the IRB at the other institution. The US Department of Health & Human Services Office of Human Research Protections allows that an institution can "rely upon the review of another qualified IRB" (<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/regulations/45-cfr-46/#46.114>) whether or not an institution has its own IRB.

If a faculty member wants to cooperatively participate in a research project that has received IRB approval from another institution, please complete this form.

Please check the boxes below to acknowledge you have read and agreed to the following:

- ☒ I will provide a copy of the research prospectus and IRB approval to the Office of Institutional Research.
- ☒ I will follow the instructions and guidelines for conducting the research as outlined in the research prospectus and IRB approval.
- ☒ I acknowledge that ■■■ is not granting approval for nor endorsing the research project.
- ☒ No ■■■ resources, other than class time involving the interactions of students and faculty, are being requested.
- ☒ I will uphold the ■■■ [Faculty Code of Professional Ethics](#) while participating in this project.
- ☒ The President or his/her designee can refuse ■■■ participation or cancel ■■■ participation at any time.

Bert M. Bitanga

Faculty Name (Please print)

Applied Sciences and Business

7236

Fall/Spring

Department

Extension

Semester of participation

August 29, 2022

Signature

Date

Appendix G - Participant Email Invitation

Dear Prospective Interview Participant,

I am a doctoral student with Kansas State University, and as a degree requirement, I am conducting a research study entitled, *An Uphill Hurdle to Education: The lived experiences of housing insecure and homeless students in a Southern California community college*.

This is a letter of invitation to participate in the research study. The purpose of the study is to understand and analyze your life story and your experiences with college access and academic persistence at the community college you currently attend.

Providing consent to participate in the study will allow me as the researcher or principal investigator to include your responses in my data analysis. An informed consent agreement is attached on this email. There will be no individually identifiable information, remarks, comments or other identification of you as an individual participant. All results will be presented as summary data in narrative form. If you wish, you may request a copy of the results of this research study by emailing me at: bitanga@ksu.edu.

Your participation in this research study is strictly voluntary, and you may choose not to participate without fear of penalty or any negative consequences. You will be able to withdraw from the interview at any time and all interview responses will be deleted, including the informed consent agreement.

The interview will last no more than one hour. Your participation will contribute to relevant literature on the subject of community college students and their experiences with housing insecurity and homelessness. It is important to note that the results of this research project will be published in a dissertation, but your identity will remain completely anonymous and confidential.

The anticipated timeline for participant interviews is between January 2022 and mid-February 2022. By participating in the interview, you will receive a \$25 Visa gift card in appreciation for your participation.

Questions regarding this interview may be directed to any of the following:

- Bert Bitanga, bitanga@ksu.edu, (760) 567-9008.
- KSU Dissertation Major Co-Chair Dr. Margaretta Mathis, mbmathis1@ksu.edu
- Lisa Rubin, Chair, Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224
- Cheryl Doerr, Associate Vice President for Research Compliance, 203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University, Manhattan, KS 66506, (785) 532-3224.

Thank you for your consideration,

Bert M. Bitanga

Appendix H - Informed Consent Form

PROJECT TITLE:

An uphill hurdle to education: The experiences of housing insecure and homeless students in a Southern California community college

**PROJECT APPROVAL
DATE:**

10/25/21

**PROJECT EXPIRATION
DATE:**

10/24/24

**LENGTH OF
STUDY:****PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR:**

Bert M. Bitanga

CONTACT DETAILS FOR PROBLEMS/QUESTIONS:

xxxx@ksu.edu
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

IRB CHAIR CONTACT INFORMATION:

Rick Scheidt
203 Fairchild Hall, Kansas State University
Manhattan, KS 66506
(XXX) XXX-XXXX

PROJECT SPONSOR:

Bert M. Bitanga

PURPOSE OF THE RESEARCH:

The purpose of this study is to understand the life stories of housing insecure and homeless students, and their experiences with college access and academic persistence at a southern California community college.

PROCEDURES OR METHODS TO BE USED:

- A face-to-face interview will require you and the researcher to apply personal protective measures, including social distancing with a minimum of 6 feet, and wearing face masks and gloves (provided).
- You will be asked to read and sign the Informed Consent Form.
- The researcher will review the study with you and assure the confidentiality of the interview.
- You will be informed that breaks from the interview for any reason is available upon request.
- You will be informed that if for any reason you are uncomfortable with any question, the researcher will stop and proceed to the next question.
- You will be informed that if for any reason you request to stop the interview, the interview will be discontinued.
- You will be asked if you have any questions.
- You will be asked for permission to audio record the interview.
- The interview will take approximately 1 hour and you will be asked a series of open-ended questions pertaining to your lived experiences with housing insecurity or homelessness.
- More specifically, you will be asked to share information about your upbringing, early education, significant turning points in your life, your decision to enroll into college, your experience applying to college, and the experience with your educational progress.
- After the final question has been answered, the researcher will inform you that the interview has concluded.
- You will be informed that, once completed, the researcher will share the findings of the study with you as a request for feedback or comments.

- You will be reminded to contact the researcher if you have any questions.
- For your participation in the study, you will receive a \$125 gift card.

ALTERNATIVE PROCEDURES OR TREATMENTS, IF ANY, THAT MIGHT BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO SUBJECT:

- Interviews can be completed through Zoom or telephone.
- The Informed Consent Form will be provided to you via email once the date of the interview is established.
- You will be asked to read the Informed Consent Form.
- By responding to the email, you will be providing consent to be interviewed.
- The researcher will review the study with you and assure the confidentiality of the interview.
- You will be informed that breaks from the interview for any reason is available upon request.
- You will be informed that if for any reason you are uncomfortable with any question, the researcher will stop and proceed to the next question.
- You will be informed that if for any reason you request to stop the interview, the interview will be discontinued.
- You will be asked if you have any questions.
- You will be asked for permission to audio record the interview.
- The interview will take approximately 1 hour and you will be asked a series of open-ended questions pertaining to your lived experiences with housing insecurity or homelessness.
- More specifically, you will be asked to share information about your upbringing, early education, significant turning points in your life, your decision to enroll into college, your experience applying to college, and the experience with your educational progress.
- After the final question has been answered, the researcher will inform you that the interview has concluded.
- You will be informed that, once completed, the researcher will share the findings of the study with you as a request for feedback or comments.
- You will be reminded to contact the researcher if you have any questions.
- You will be asked how you want to receive the \$25 gift card.

RISKS OR DISCOMFORTS ANTICIPATED:

There are no known risks of this study; however, due to the sensitive topic of the study, you may feel some discomfort answering the research questions. The researcher has provided some strategies found in the Appendix C – Interview Protocol that will help to minimize the discomfort.

BENEFITS ANTICIPATED:

It is the hope of the researcher that this study will help provide data directly from students' perceptions used to inform knowledge and help fill a gap on this research topic. Additionally, the findings and recommendations of this study can help to inform the development of institutional policy to promote best practices in addressing housing insecurity and homelessness in higher education.

EXTENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY:

- Your identity will be kept anonymous and the information you provide will be confidential.
- All correspondence and data will be secured in a locked safe for 5 years.
- After 5 years, all correspondence and data will be properly destroyed and disposed to ensure confidentiality of data and your anonymity.
- Securing your dignity, privacy, and well-being is the highest priority.

PARENTAL APPROVAL FOR MINORS:

**PARENT/GUARDIAN APPROVAL
SIGNATURE:**

DATE:

Terms of participation: I understand this project is research, and that my participation is voluntary. I also understand that if I decide to participate in this study, I may withdraw my consent at any time, and stop participating at any time without explanation, penalty, or loss of benefits, or academic standing to which I may otherwise be entitled.

I verify that my signature indicates that I have read and understand this consent form, and willingly agree to participate in this study under the terms described, and that my signature acknowledges that I have received a signed and dated copy of this consent form.

(Remember that it is a requirement for the P.I. to maintain a signed and dated copy of the same consent form signed and kept by the participant).

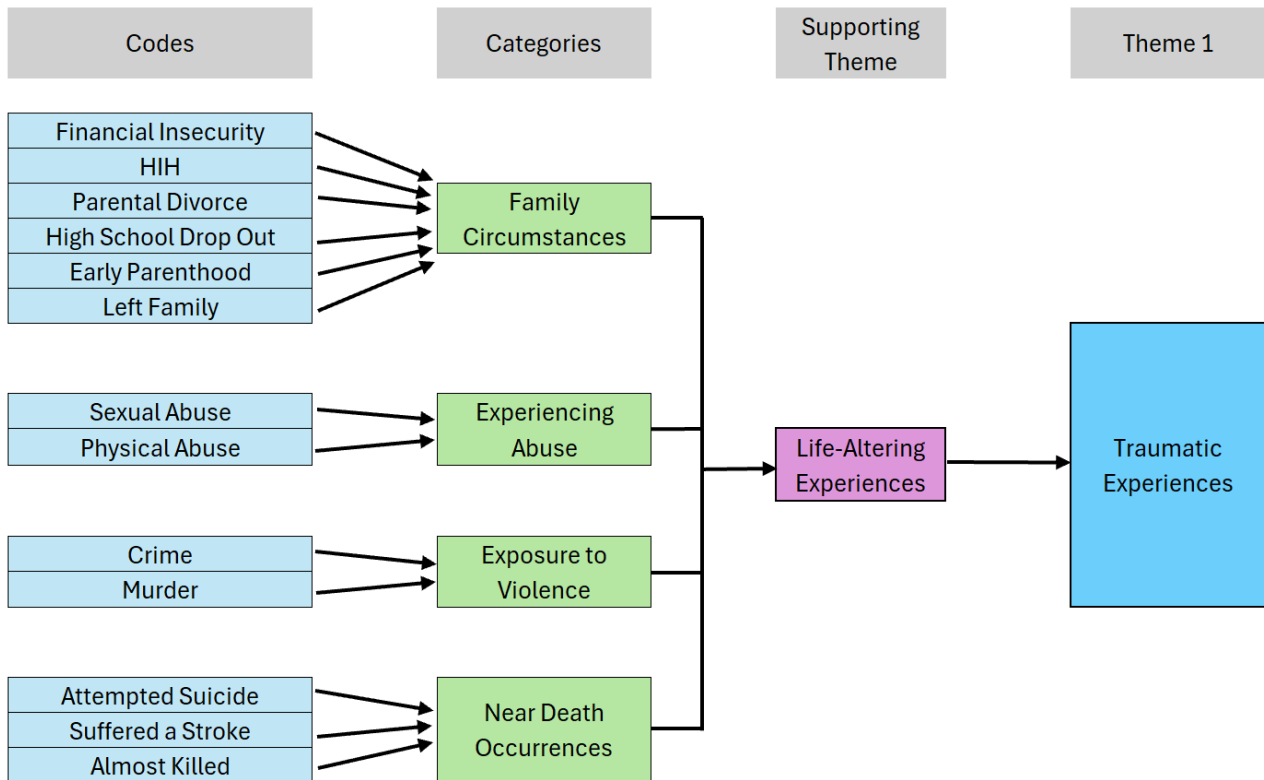
PARTICIPANT NAME:

PARTICIPANT SIGNATURE:

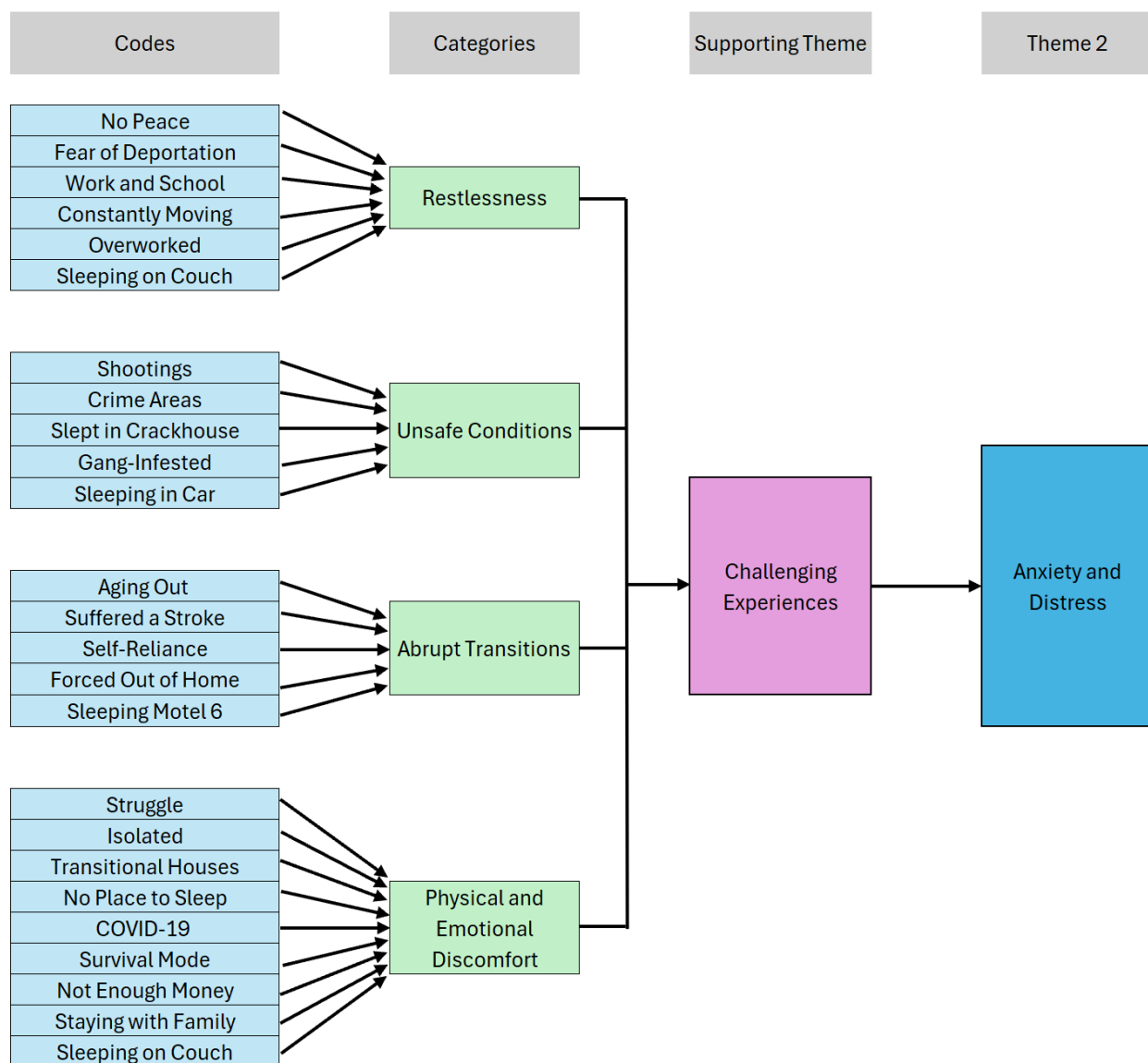
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Appendix I - Analysis Map

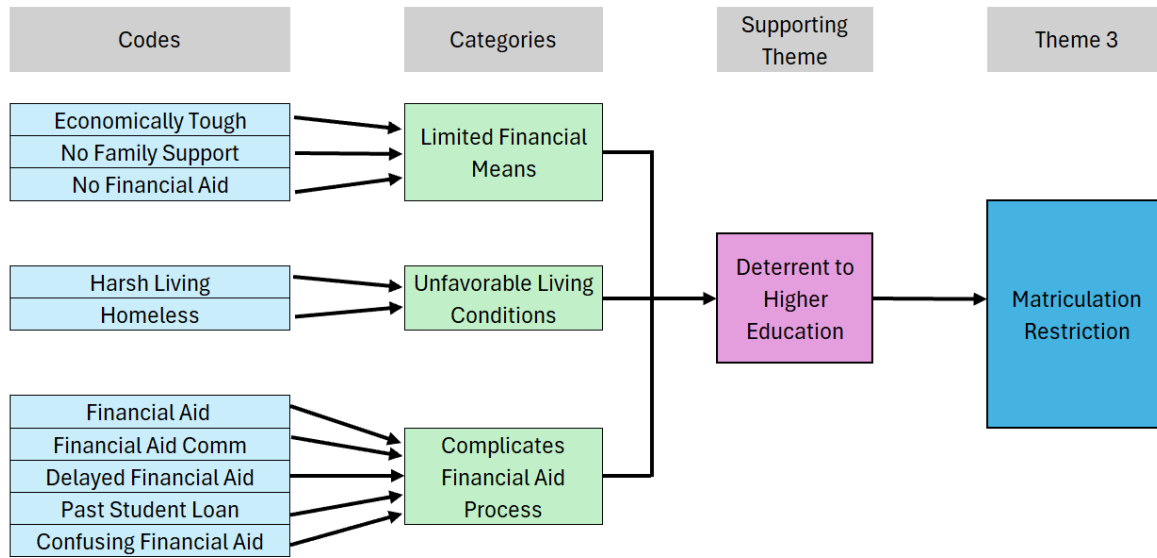
Theme 1 - Traumatic Experiences



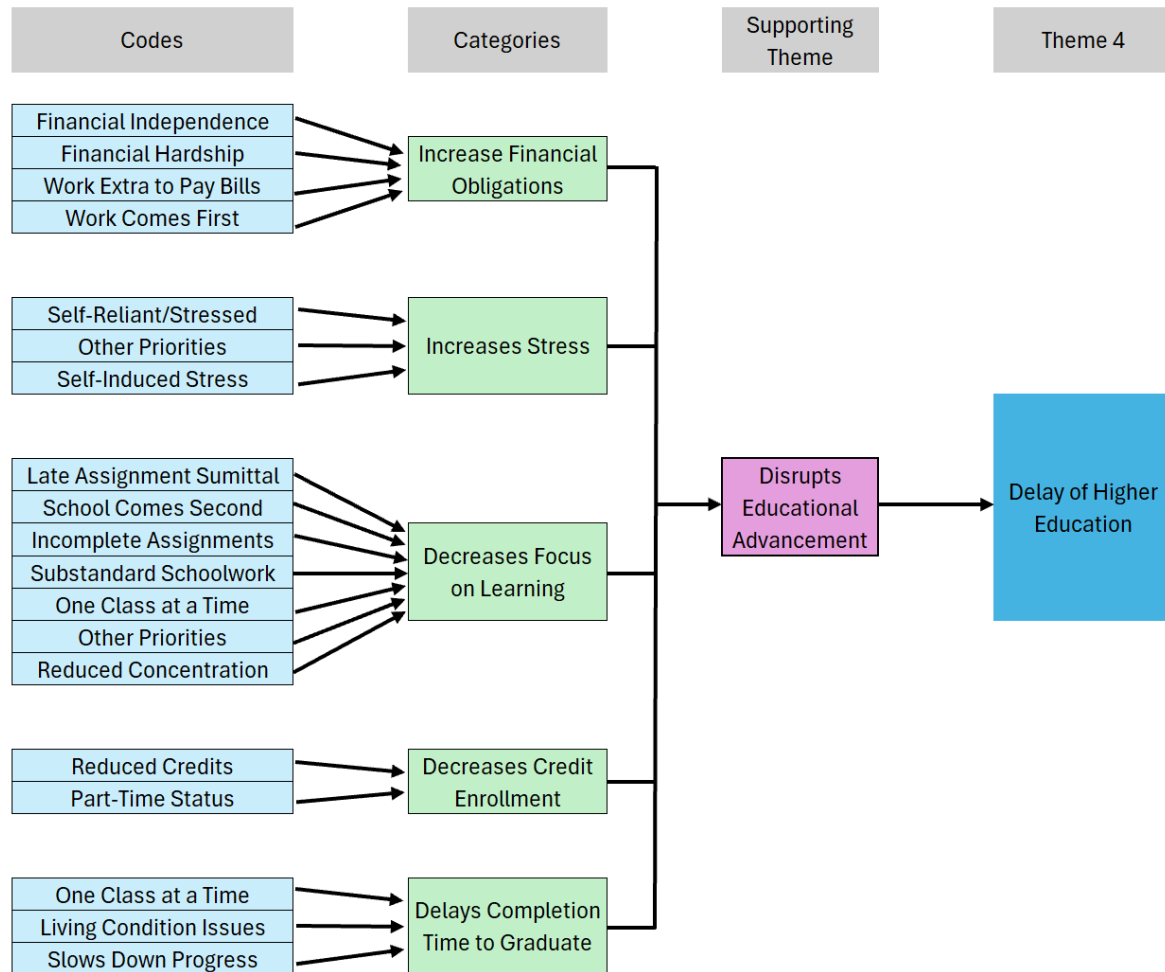
Theme 2 - Anxiety and Distress



Theme 3 - Matriculation Restriction



Theme 4 - Delay of Higher Education



Theme 5 - Resiliency

