

YOUNG ADOLESCENT IDENTITIES BEYOND THE SINGLE STORY:
RE-HUMANIZING EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS
TO CHALLENGE DOMINANT NARRATIVES

by

MATTHEW JOHN MOULTON

(Under the Direction of P. Gayle Andrews)

ABSTRACT

There are 1.3 million documented students experiencing homelessness enrolled in United States public schools. These students are rarely afforded opportunities to challenge and rehumanize the narratives surrounding homelessness. Everyone seems to know something about “homelessness” without seeking the knowledge and related nuance present in the minds of individuals who experience it. The purpose of this youth-engaged humanizing research single-case qualitative study was to document the lived experiences of a young adolescent experiencing homelessness in a small city in the southeastern United States. This study was guided by two research questions. (1) What funds of identity do students experiencing homelessness possess? (2) How are these funds of identity supported, if at all, by school structures and personnel? Data were gathered via field notes, semi-structured interviews, and the participatory method of identity artifact creation. Data generation and analysis revealed four funds of identity that influence the participant’s day-to-day experiences, including identifying as: a friend, a family member, a creator, an “homeless.” The participant’s school simultaneously supports,

stifles, and perpetuates each of these funds of identity in some way. Findings present a complex and nuanced portrait of a young adolescent who experiences homelessness that counters dominant societal narratives. The funds of identity of young adolescents experiencing homelessness point to locations that educators could engage with to promote meaningful learning, student success, and development of equitable policies and practices.

INDEX WORDS: Education, Middle Grades, Young Adolescent, Homelessness, Homeless, Funds of Identity, Humanizing Research

YOUNG ADOLESCENT IDENTITIES BEYOND THE SINGLE STORY:
RE-HUMANIZING EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS
TO CHALLENGE DOMINANT NARRATIVES

by

MATTHEW JOHN MOULTON

B.A., University of Florida, 2007

M.S., University of Houston - Clear Lake, 2013

A Dissertation Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for Degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2018

© 2018

Matthew J. Moulton

All Rights Reserved

YOUNG ADOLESCENT IDENTITIES BEYOND THE SINGLE STORY:
RE-HUMANIZING EXPERIENCES OF HOMELESSNESS
TO CHALLENGE DOMINANT NARRATIVES

by

MATTHEW JOHN MOULTON

Major Professor: P. Gayle Andrews

Committee: Hilary E. Hughes
Kevin J. Burke

Electronic Version Approved:

Suzanne Barbour
Dean of the Graduate School
The University of Georgia
May 2018

DEDICATION

For AJ, Dora, Jack, and Michelle. Thanks for sharing stories.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The past four years have been quite a trip. Pursuing a PhD was nothing like what I thought it was going to be¹. My name may be typed in capital letters on the very first printed page in this book², but claiming ownership of these pages without mention of those who brought me to this point would be absurd.

*Dr. Gayle Andrews*³, I have benefitted immeasurably from your overwhelming guidance, support, and time. I am proud to be of your academic lineage. Thank you for being a champion for middle grades education and young adolescents. Thank you for trusting me with teaching future teachers and for setting an example of how to celebrate them. Thank you for the marathon writing sessions, field trips, and all the “other duties as assigned” that you took on as my major professor. Most of all, thank you for being *my person*. I have cried with you, laughed with you, and I look forward to a day when we can quote Parks and Rec while traveling to spend time with the mental giants you call friends. My life is immensely more rich because of your influence and care.

*Dr. Hilary Hughes*⁴, your excitement for the PhD journey was noticeable from day one. Thank you for introducing me to the concept of PhDness, encouraging me to take chances with my writing, and helping me develop as a teacher of teachers. Thank you.

¹ I can’t remember what I thought it was going to be but it sure as hell was not this.

² A LEGIT BOOK!

³ You opalescent tree shark.

⁴ Large(!) chunks of writing containing passive voice were edited by you.

*Dr. Kevin Burke*⁵, thank you for always ending our conversations with “Let me know how I can help.” You reminded me that joy, even in dark and troubling times, exists in this work. I wish I had the words to describe what that means to me.

Dr. Kathy Thompson, Dr. Ajay Sharma, Dr. Cory Buxton, and Dr. Amy Murphy, I have learned so much from each of you both in and out of the classroom. Thank you for your patience and kindness.

Jemelleh, you are a blessing in my life. You are the definition of hustle and grace. You make me want to be a better person. *Jesús*⁶, I feel like I have known you forever. Thank you for pushing me when needed. Thank you for talking through the messes. Thanks for the beers, the movies, the inside jokes, the coffee, the staghorn fern, sharing your home, but most of all, thanks for the time. I appreciate it. I appreciate you. *Amy* and *Calliope*, thank you for sharing Jesús with me. Thanks for being good friends and neighbors. *Susan*, thanks for diving right in to the program and a friendship. I learn so much from you. I can only imagine the fantastic work you are going to do in and out of classrooms. *Ashley*, your positivity and encouragement were exactly what was needed in times of difficulty. Thanks for your excitement through this process. You are a great pal. *Vicki*, the roses you gave Michelle and I greet me every time I walk out the door. They give me hope for renewal. *John, Julie, Gillian, and Brendan*, I don’t think there could have been a better time in my life for our families to cross paths. Finding joy, sharing a table, commiserating, and encouraging Michelle, Jack, and I will never be forgotten. *Father Daniel*, thank you for being bold from day one. Thank you for pursuing justice

⁵ I am certain you would have made fun of me in high school.

⁶ I am certain that Kevin would have made fun of us in high school.

with fervor. Thank you for supporting this work, being willing to chat, and most of all your friendship.

At points in this process I leaned heavily on the following for inspiration, reassurance, and respite. Clive. Jittery Joe's. *Southern Bastards*. *Comic Book Junto*. Brant and Sherri's *Oddcast*. *Paper Things*. Run the Jewels. Trampled by Turtles. Your Pie. Basketball. Judah and the Lion. Francis and the Lights. Sia. Hillsong. @BreneBrown. The Dead South. Needtobreathe. Chance the Rapper. Cali n Tito's. The High Kings. *Parks and Recreation*. C.S. Lewis. Terrapin Beer. *The Good Place*. *Evicted*. *Stranger Things*. #EDMG2019. LEGO. @BobGoff. Kamala Khan. *This Old House*. NPR. *There Goes the Neighborhood*. Bulldog 93.3. Owl Nation. Jack's gymnastics classes.

Mom and Dad, words cannot describe the support you have provided through the years. Michelle, Jack, and I could not have made it without your unending love. Thank you for making this possible. It is an honor to have your last name. I hope you read these pages and recognize how you are the cultural and historical location I come from. I love you.

Ryan, your creativity helped me make sense of theoretical concepts. Your conversations are even more valuable. Your laughter is like medicine. When I grow up I want to be like my younger brother. I love you.

Angel and Stirling, thank you for looking after this family physically and emotionally. Thank you for making numerous trips across state lines to look after a sick kid. Thank you for lending us a car so I didn't freeze on that scooter. Thank you for being only three hours away. I love you.

Megan and *Jason*, you are a fantastic aunt and uncle. Thank you for loving on Jack and for being a listening ear. Georgia Grace is one lucky girl. I love you.

Jack, being your father brings me more joy than any degree ever could. I am proud of the little man you are. I love you.

Michelle, home is whenever I'm with you. We did it. Laughter. Tears. Everything. Quite the adventure. I never would have been able to get to this point without you. You are my favorite. Thank you for learning alongside me. But, most of all, thank you for always reminding me where my true worth can be found. I love you.

*Cause I can't help myself
There is no one else
Like you, God*

*I could sing a song
A hundred miles long
But it won't compare*

*Hallelujah sing to the Lord
Hallelujah my soul rejoice
—Judah & the Lion*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
CHAPTER	
1 INTRODUCTION	1
The Immense Weight of Single Story Narratives about Homelessness	1
Need for the Study	4
Rationale for the Study	6
Epistemological Stance and Theoretical Framework	10
Methodological Framework	12
Overview of the Dissertation	14
2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK	16
Homelessness Hits Home	16
Mapping the Literature Landscape of Student Homelessness	18
What is Homelessness and Who is “Homeless”?	20
Homelessness by the Numbers	25
McKinney-Vento: The Federal Response to Homelessness	37
Examination & Critique of Literature on Youth Homelessness	41
Why Focus on Student Homelessness in the Middle Grades?	54

Conceptual Framework	59
Chapter Summary	61
3 METHODS	65
Rewarded for Effort	65
Design of the Study	68
Participant Recruitment	95
Data Collection	98
Data Analysis	106
Chapter Summary	110
4 FINDINGS	115
It Sneaks Up On You	115
AJ	117
AJ's Funds of Identity	130
School-Based Structures and Supports for AJ's Funds of Identity	159
Chapter Summary	172
5 SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS	175
Late Afternoon on a Football Gameday	175
Summary of the Study	177
Implications	194
Recommendations for Future Research	211
Concluding Thoughts	212
REFERENCES	216

APPENDICES

A	NATIONAL STUDENT HOMELESSNESS DATA TABLE	245
B	PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER	247
C	PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM	249
D	PARTICIPANT ASSENT LETTER.....	252
E	DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOLS	254

LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 2.1 Definitions of Who Qualifies for Homeless Services.....	22
Table 2.2 Educational and School-Related Activities Provided to Homeless Students by Grant Recipients.....	33
Table 3.1 Types of funds of identity	91
Table 3.2 Emerging Ideas in Data Analysis.....	107
Table 3.3 Beginning Understandings of AJ's Funds of Identity	110
Table 4.1 Building Officials and Code Administrators equations for square footage.....	148
Table 5.1 How AJ's Phone Influences Documented Funds of Identity.....	190

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 2.1 Flow Chart of the Organization of This Chapter's Content	20
Figure 2.2 Students Experiencing Homelessness in USA	26
Figure 2.3 Visual Representation of Homelessness by State.....	27
Figure 2.4 Visualization of Federal Grant Dollars.....	29
Figure 2.5 Continuum of Perceived Expertise Related to Homelessness.....	60
Figure 2.6 Proposed Conceptual Framework.....	61
Figure 3.1 Flow Chart of the Organization of This Chapter's Content	67
Figure 3.2 Youth Engaged Research Theoretical Formulation	81
Figure 3.3 Emerging Ideas from Data Analysis.....	108
Figure 3.4 Phone Emerging Theme Sorted.....	109
Figure 4.1 Townhome Floor Plan	121
Figure 4.2 Shelter Floor Plan	122
Figure 4.3 AJ's First Map of School.....	131
Figure 4.4 AJ's Second Map of School	133
Figure 4.5 AJ's Significant Circle	135
Figure 4.6 AJ's Family Constellation	143
Figure 5.1 AJ's Support Network of Caring Adults	196

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Immense Weight of Single Story Narratives about Homelessness

The Saturday morning routine for my family involves walking from our apartment a little more than a mile uphill to a local coffee shop in a part of town that seems removed from the rest of the city we call home. This coffee shop sits nearly in the middle of two intersecting streets that divide this part of the southeastern United States college town into four quadrants. These quadrants hold historic fraternity and sorority houses; high socioeconomic status neighborhoods with large lawns and even larger homes; student housing, which becomes significantly less expensive the farther one travels away from the origin of this axis; and the state's flagship, land-grant, research university. Near the center of this part of town is a collection of shops, restaurants, and opportunities for recreation that provide for all wants and needs if, and only if, one has the financial capital to partake. Establishments include private gyms, a bicycle store, numerous upscale restaurants and fashion boutiques, two (2!) running stores within 200 yards of each other, a bakery, a bookstore, one of the city's highest-rated elementary schools, and a grocery store that caters to shoppers seeking organic items. Very little, other than poverty, is visibly lacking in this part of the city.

One Saturday morning, I found myself at the coffee shop sitting with some families who lived nearby. We discussed life as our children rampaged around the college students already diligently working at the tables with their laptops glowing and the runners and cyclists who finished their exercise and sought relief with a cup of joe. While

I was preparing to leave, one member of the assembled group asked what I was studying. I launched into an elevator speech about homelessness, specifically about young adolescents experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity. How their voices are essentially absent from conversations about how to best help them in their day-to-day actions. How students experiencing homelessness are more than just a label. How their identities and day-to-day lives are extremely varied and rarely acknowledged as such. How society has opinions and misconceptions about homelessness that bleed into classrooms, narratives, and media depictions. How the purpose of the study was to work with, not on, students experiencing homelessness. The acquaintance, nodding in agreement, responded with something to the effect of “Well, homeless people may not have the brainpower necessary to be in those conversations.”

I do not know if my response was audible but Chimamanda Adichie’s (2009) TED talk about the danger of a single story immediately came to mind. Adichie uses the concept of a *single story* to describe the trouble present in repeating singular aspects or stereotypes about persons, places, or things. Assumptions can be made and dominant narratives are taken for fact. The result is a perpetuation of a story, in some cases deficit laden, that does little if anything to escape “patronizing, well-meaning pity” (Adichie, 2009, 4:48). Pity and deficit perspectives result in conversations marred by preconceived notions about individuals experiencing homelessness. Not only what individuals’ lives are like, but also the circumstances that lead to homelessness. Single stories rob people of their dignity and set entire groups of people apart from the speaker, encouraging a focus on how someone is different, or abnormal, from the speaker (Adichie, 2009). This is one of the most daunting aspects about advocating for those experiencing homelessness:

everyone seems to know something about “homelessness” without seeking the knowledge and related nuance present in the minds of individuals who experience it.

This dissertation is also a story. It is a single young adolescent’s story, but all attempts are made to ensure that it is not a *single story*. Some of the characters are young. Their age does not diminish their importance. Other characters may seem to be only tangentially connected, but their influence should not be underestimated. Some characters have skin, muscle, bone, and their breaths fogs up cold school bus windows. Other characters are faceless, representing national discourses and perspectives, and although they may seem to exist only on paper or solely within mindsets, they are just as much alive. These characters are policies and ideologies that govern homelessness and those who experience it. They choreograph this dance.

AJ is our protagonist in these pages. Though he is a single individual, his wisdom and expertise must be shared. Our learning opportunities from AJ seem potentially limitless. Timothy San Pedro, in conversation with Valerie Kinloch, said “Often what we want as human beings is to have someone hear our stories, connect with us, pay attention to us” (Kinloch & San Pedro, 2014, p. 24). This sentiment is at the core of the theoretical framework that frames this single participant case study. Humanizing research (Paris, 2011) and its emphasis on relationships built on and around dignity and care guides this dissertation’s retelling of AJ’s experiences. A critical constructivism (Kincheloe, 2005) epistemological stance frames the elaboration of society’s beliefs about AJ’s existence. Esteban-Guitart’s (2012) concept of funds of identity provides the methodology that both conveys AJ’s humanity and the depth and influence that his story may provide to inform

policy and procedures in classrooms, schools, and districts alike. AJ puts a very real face on homelessness and how it manifests itself in and out of classrooms across the country.

Need for the Study

Homelessness impacts rural, suburban, and urban schools all across the country (National Center for Homeless Education [NCHE], 2016). Every day, as students filter through school doors, into classrooms, and populate desks, they bring with them every bit of their lived experience from outside the school walls. An educator's job is to ensure an equitable and appropriate educational experience for every student. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 (MV) (2015) was originally enacted in 1987 as the McKinney-Vento Act. It mandated that students experiencing homelessness be provided access to the same equitable and appropriate educational experiences that all students have access to. It was not until 2001 that the law officially defined homeless as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" (§ 725). Conservative estimates place the number of students identified as homeless in United States public schools at 1.3 million individuals (United States Department of Education [USDOE], 2016).

Students experiencing homelessness have seldom had their voices recognized as viable and vital with respect to their education and school experiences (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Saldanha, 2015). This echoes findings from Brinegar's (2015) content analysis of middle grades research literature in which the percentage of American children living in poverty is much larger than the percentage of middle grades research articles that address the education of students experiencing poverty (22% living in poverty vs. 1% of reviewed middle grades publications). This dissertation study seeks to

address that gap in middle grades research by seeking information from the experts who experience homelessness, the young adolescent students themselves.

The setting of our story is North Fork School District (NFSD)⁷, a small-city urban district in the southeastern United States. NFSD has seen incredible growth in the population of students identified as experiencing homelessness over the last five years. North Fork's population of students experiencing homelessness during the 2014-2015 school year was 698; a number more than three times greater than the 2011-2012 school year (Georgia Department of Education [GADOE], 2016). Even those numbers, which would account for roughly five percent of the students enrolled in NFSD schools, could drastically under-represent the true total population of students experiencing homelessness within the district. The district's homeless liaison estimates that the true count could be as high as 1,400 students (personal communication, school district homeless liaison, October 3, 2016). A NFSD middle school principal estimates that one of every ten students in his school meets the MV definition of experiencing homelessness (personal communication, middle school principal, October 15, 2016). The sizable population of students experiencing homelessness nationally and their apparent lack of representation in the educational literature necessitates research to document the experiences and better meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this single-case (Gast & Ledford, 2014) qualitative study was to document the lived experiences of a young adolescent experiencing homelessness in a small city in the southeastern United States. The study addresses the dearth of middle

⁷ To protect the anonymity of individuals who are described in this study, names of individuals, cities, counties, and school districts have been given pseudonyms.

grades research on youth from marginalized perspectives (Brinegar, 2015). Specifically, this study documented the funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2016) of a student experiencing homelessness and how middle grades faculty, staff, and policies supported those funds of identity in the day-to-day experiences of young adolescents experiencing homelessness in middle school classrooms. Additionally, the study seeks to rehumanize, trouble, and elaborate upon the single story narrative that governs society's perception of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Research Questions

To address the limited documentation and consideration of young adolescent voices from marginalized populations, this dissertation explores the experiences of youth identified as homeless. This study frames young adolescents' experiences as being socially and contextually constructed, acknowledging that larger society is complicit in constructing the dominant narrative surrounding homelessness while excluding the insight provided by those experiencing homelessness themselves. In particular, I focus my attention on examining how AJ's funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2012) are considered within his school. To explore this consideration, the following research questions guided this study:

1. What funds of identity do students experiencing homelessness possess?
2. How are these funds of identity supported, if at all, by school structures and personnel?

Rationale for the Study

Jonathan Kozol (1988) wrote, "The use of the unrestrictive term, 'the homeless,' is in certain ways misleading. It suggests a uniform set of problems and a single category

of poor people...the uniformity is in their mode of suffering, not in themselves” (p. 115). Kozol’s critique of the term *homeless* is as true today as it was in 1988. For many people, the single story surrounding homelessness is one of ineptitude and unintelligence (Kim, 2013). When asked to picture an individual experiencing homelessness, more often than not, adjectives used include “dirty, hungry, drunken, addicted, or psychotic” (Kim, 2013, p. 294). Additionally, as a result of the dominant societal narrative surrounding homelessness, young adolescents experiencing homelessness at times are “stereotyped as having a negative influence on other children in public school” (Crook, 2015, p. 403). This single story is damaging to all individuals experiencing homelessness but even more so for young adolescents who already experience marginalization as a group at the hands of adults (Andrews, 2011, 2013; Lesko, 1996; Lesko & Mitschele, 2013). But, where do deficit-based ideas and single stories like these come from?

The single story of poverty and homelessness is perpetuated through numerous outlets. A 2017 study performed by The Washington Post and Kaiser Family Foundation of nearly 1,700 adults across the country found that Christians were nearly twice as likely as non-Christians to equate poverty with personal failings. Stephen Pimpare (2017b), a policy professor at the University of New Hampshire, states that pop-culture depictions of poverty also contribute to deficit perspectives.

[P]oor people onscreen are broken and need to be fixed (“The Saint of Fort Washington,” “Being Flynn”), or lost and in need of rescue, as with movies (“Dangerous Minds,” “Freedom Writers”) that feature a *Nice White Lady* coming to inspire and save black and brown children, who merely need to be motivated to find some reservoir of pluck or grit so that they can improve their lot. These

stories are especially insidious because they teach viewers that poverty, as HUD Secretary Ben Carson said recently, is a “state of mind” rather than a condition we create through our politics and public policy. In the movies, poverty is rooted in individual failure (or one dramatic, tragic event), and the larger political and economic forces that constrain people’s opportunities are absent. (para. 8)

In addition to religious faith and popular culture, professional development for teachers is also a highly contested locale that perpetuates deficit perspectives based on faulty assumptions about those experiencing poverty. Quick fix neoliberal initiatives encourage educators in our nation’s poorest schools to adopt free-market-influenced policies that treat students experiencing poverty as data points, chess pieces almost, in a push for the transfer of public dollars into private hands (Davies & Bransel, 2007; de Saxe, 2015; de Saxe & Smith, 2016; Laitsch, 2013). One such program, Ruby Payne’s (2003) *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, has done an incredible, and lucrative, job of contracting with school districts to sell an ostensibly “helpful” professional development approach. Payne’s framework pushes a “culture of poverty” approach that is little more than stereotypical deficit perspectives of individuals experiencing poverty that do nothing to confront the societal injustices that have led to poverty (Gorski, 2011; Gorski, 2012; Sato & Lensmire, 2009; Smiley & Helfenbein, 2011).

Regardless of how the single story is purported, whether through faith doctrine, popular culture, politics, or personal anecdote, these dominant narratives must be confronted and the true identities and lived experiences of students experiencing homelessness must be sought through relationships built on dignity and care (Paris, 2011). Homelessness is a condition, not a defining characteristic. People experiencing

homelessness have been dehumanized to a point that dominant narratives overpower individual identities. This research project seeks to bring humanizing research (Paris, 2011) and funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2016) together to re-humanize the identities and narratives surrounding homelessness.

Homelessness manifests itself in numerous ways. Students experiencing homelessness exist in school spaces often unbeknownst to the teachers they interact with on a daily basis (Feuer, 2012; Hallett, Skrla, & Low, 2015). Homelessness in the United States lacked a response in the form of U.S. federal government policy until 1987 with the first enactment of the MV (Crook, 2015). Although MV served as a federal response to homelessness, a clear statement of who qualified as experiencing homelessness was not enacted until MV's reauthorization with the No Child Left Behind Act [NCLB] in 2002 (Miller, 2012; NCLB, 2002). The United States of America is no stranger to homelessness. Its effects are felt in every state, the nation's capital, and its territories (NCHE, 2016).

Young adolescents (those ages 9-15) experiencing poverty must have their voices included in research and in conversations that shape the schools whose halls they wander. If a large percentage of students' opinions, beliefs, and life experiences are not considered in schools, the result would be an issue of inequity. Doda (2013) stated "Young people lose hopeful visions of their future when they enter schools that inadvertently create barriers to success" (p. 336). As will be shown through a review of the literature and findings from this dissertation study, students experiencing homelessness operate at a level of stress that is only compounded by their falling within the bounds of early adolescence. For example, Doda (2013) wrote

Students' peer relationships can also be sources of considerable stress. In middle grades schools where the arrangement of classes, the daily schedule, and the curriculum offerings separate students in ways that accentuate social class, gender, and race differences, those arrangements are contributing to the isolation of certain groups of students, the potential escalation of hostility and bullying, and the failure to provide students with the equal chance to be welcomed members of the school. (p. 341)

In addition to the stresses that may be perpetuated by middle grades schools and their faculty, Lesko and Mitschele (2013) remind readers that, in general, young adolescents exist in a space governed by adults who view their existence as operating within a restrictive space where they are “denied power over their decisions and resources” (Lesko, 1996, p. 456). Middle grades students experiencing homelessness, through no fault of their own, have been denied the power and authority necessary to join conversations surrounding their education. They must have their voices added to conversations about their schooling experiences, policy agendas, and advocacy plans.

Epistemological Stance and Theoretical Framework

The necessity of incorporating the voices and experiences of young adolescents experiencing homelessness in policy conversations serves as an appropriate segue into the epistemological stance that guides this dissertation study. Recognizing their insights and perspectives, critical constructivism centers the experiences, intelligence, and identities of individuals from marginalized or oppressed populations (Kincheloe, 2005). Critical constructivism was born out of Friere's critical pedagogy and “emphasizes understanding the contingent nature of knowledge to induce a more critical reflection

about various educational institutions and practices” (Bentley, Fleury, & Garrison, 2007, p. 10). As an epistemology, critical constructivism contends that knowledge, and those who hold it, are shaped by cultural and historical experiences and that research cannot be undertaken without seeking an understanding of those cultural and historical constructions (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2011). Schwandt (2007) states “The constructivist seeks to explain how human beings interpret or construct some X in specific linguistic, social, and historical contexts. In addition, many constructivists hold that X is something that should be severely critiqued, challenged, or overthrown” (p. 39). Within the pages of this dissertation, X = young adolescent homelessness, and, as described above, society’s perceptions, the single storied narrative, of homelessness must be substantially critiqued. It will be impossible for me as a researcher to elaborate completely on AJ’s experiences as a young adolescent experiencing homelessness: His lived experiences are not mine. That being said, the portions, glimpses, and glimmers that he shares must be considered and run through a filter of the cultural and historical perceptions of homelessness.

This study’s purpose was to bear witness to the negativity levied at and on homelessness, point to areas of contradiction between policy, practice, and how schools take action, and to act in concert with students who have experienced homelessness (Apple, Au, & Gandin, 2009). The theoretical frame was largely influenced by integrating aspects of humanizing research (Paris, 2011; Paris & Winn, 2014) and youth engaged research (Foster-Fishman, Law, Lichty, & Aoun, 2010; Iwasaki et al., 2014).

Humanizing research (Paris, 2011) revolves around the full investment of researchers and participants in relationships built on care and dignity. Paris and Winn

(2014) conceptualize humanizing research as methods and interactions “[T]hat involve the building of relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness raising for both researchers and participants. Furthermore, we view such a research stance and its processes as involving reciprocity and respect” (p. xvi).

Reciprocity and respect go hand in hand with youth engaged research. Paulo Freire (1974/2013) believed that working in conjunction with oppressed populations was the only authentic way to accomplish true progress. Youth engaged research is largely influenced by Freire’s conceptions of critical pedagogy and empowerment for the youth involved, as individuals and as citizens of a larger society (Jennings, Parra-Medina, Messias, & McLaughlin, 2006; Kinloch, 2005).

Methodological Framework

Critical constructivism centers the expertise of individuals from marginalized or oppressed populations (Kincheloe, 2005). Humanizing research, as a theoretical framework, stresses the importance of working with and for participants through relationships of reciprocity and respect. Methodologically, a qualitative single participant case study (Yin, 2003), Esteban-Guitart’s (2012) funds of identity, and the participatory nature of identity artifact creation fit well within the epistemological and theoretical frameworks.

The process of seeking permission from my institution’s Institutional Review Board and from North Fork School District was lengthy and fraught with revisions and modifications. Eventually, permission was granted and I began participant recruitment through six different organizations. Of the six organizations, three agreed to serve as a

liaison of sorts between me as a researcher and the population they work with as potential participants. These efforts resulted in one participant, AJ.

Data collection was influenced by Paris' (2011) humanizing research and revolved around a mutual relationship of dignity and respect between AJ and myself. Our varied interactions (e.g., meals, texts, phone calls, etc.) provided opportunities for the collection of three types of data: field notes, semi-structured interviews, and identity artifacts. Field notes were recorded in my researcher's notebook during research sessions, immediately following the research session, and at random points in time that ideas presented themselves. Each of the six research sessions was audio recorded and transcribed for analysis. The identity artifacts that AJ made included a map of the apartment his family shared at the shelter, a map of his school, and a significant circle. Each identity artifact was used as an elicitation device for further conversation. The data was collected and organized into different password protected Google Drive folders that were only accessible to me and my principal investigator, Dr. Gayle Andrews.

It is difficult to point to a specific date that analysis began. It was/is an ongoing process. Creswell's (1998) and later Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral influenced data analysis. I started by holistically reading through the transcripts and field notes while listening to the audio recordings of our research sessions and took notes of emerging ideas. These emerging ideas were then described and classified into themes which, in turn, were developed into interpretations of AJ's experiences. Then I approached AJ with my beginning understandings and interpretations to perform a series of member checks about the funds of identity that were taking shape across the data. With his approval I then proceeded to craft an account of the findings.

Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation is AJ's story. It cannot and should not be viewed as a complete and all-encompassing tale of AJ's experiences from birth to present day. This story has boundaries. It is shaped by AJ's experiences in the shelter he resided in while we met for research sessions. Despite the chronological brackets, the story is also shaped by AJ's cultural and historical experiences. Just as he cannot take the frame they provide off, I cannot ignore my personal experiences and perceptions of individuals experiencing homelessness. With those realities foregrounded, this dissertation is organized as described below.

Chapter one began with a vignette that demonstrated how society views homelessness and those who experience it. The need for and purpose of the study were explained and led into the two research questions that guided this dissertation study. I then presented my rationale for the study and situated it within the epistemological and theoretical frames that direct the study. This led into a brief overview of the methodological framework of the study.

Chapter two begins by defining homelessness and those who experience it. I then present a review of the relevant literature in which I first paint a picture of the severity of homelessness across the United States, the state of Georgia, and North Fork School District. Secondly, I present and critique the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 and describe how it shapes homelessness policy in school contexts. Third, I examine and critique literature on youth experiencing homelessness. I conclude the chapter by describing the necessity of research in middle level education that works with and for young adolescents experiencing homelessness

and construct and situate this study within a conceptual framework, influenced by the reviewed literature and this study's theoretical framework, for research with and for students experiencing homelessness.

Chapter three serves two purposes. I begin the chapter by elaborating upon the design of this single-participant qualitative humanizing research study that employed the participatory method of identity artifact creation. Next, I present relevant literature related to the methodology and describe the methods used in participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis.

Chapter four presents AJ's case and his funds of identity. I begin the chapter by describing AJ as he presents himself to me and display for readers the identity artifacts that AJ crafted during our research sessions. I describe the different funds of identity that revealed themselves in the study and illustrate how AJ has developed these funds in both physical and digital spaces. Next, I describe how AJ's school supports and hinders his funds of identity.

Chapter five presents a summary of this dissertation study, a discussion of the findings, and implications for schools and policy makers. Additionally, chapter five describes potential areas for future research with and for young adolescents experiencing homelessness.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Homelessness Hits Home

I recently received a cryptic text message from my mother asking if I had a minute to chat. Knowing that this exchange could lead in multiple directions, I prepared myself emotionally for a number of different conversations, none of which came to fruition. My phone rang. I picked up and said, “Hey, Mom. What’s going on?”

“Well,” she replied, “Your sister is now homeless.”

I gave it a few seconds to sink in then responded, “Hmm. I am going to need some details.” My sister, her husband, daughter, and two sons were evicted from the home they had lived in for less than a year. They were unable to pay heating bills over the course of the New England winter. Once their landlord decided it was warm enough, and they were still unable to pay, they were evicted. Maine, like most states, does not put limits on landlords seeking evictions (Pine Tree Legal, 2017). In some cases, other agencies will go to bat for tenants when temperatures are low. In Illinois, Cook County sheriffs will not evict individuals when it is colder than 15 degrees Fahrenheit or during the week between Christmas and New Years (Cook County Sheriff’s Office, 2017). Desmond (2016) describes eviction as all encompassing and debilitating. It is relentless. Thinking about the kids (ages 12, 10, and 8), I asked if school was over for the year and immediately looked up the contact information for their school district’s homeless liaison. Regardless of their housing situation, they deserve “equal access to the same free,

appropriate public education... as provided to other children and youths” (MV, 2015, § 721). I passed the liaison information to my mother who gave it to my sister.

“She says she needs groceries and gas to get the kids to school. Do I give her money? What if she only buys cigarettes and coffee?” my mom asked with pain, confusion, and concern for her first born child in her voice.

Again, I led with “Hmm.” My sister has always been wicked smart. She has not always made the best choices but in many ways society has knocked her down to a place where she feels she cannot get back up. That being said, I responded with something to the effect of “Regardless of her being my sister. Regardless of how much coffee she drinks and how many cigarettes she smokes, experiencing homelessness does not mean that she loses the privilege of smoking or drinking coffee. In fact, this stressful time of transience may require the respite that smoking and coffee bring. I would hate to see her without cigarettes and coffee, in a hotel room for an extended time. Homelessness should not strip her of her humanity.” That is part of the re-humanizing that needs to take place with respect to individuals experiencing homelessness. Dominant narratives—that we may not even consciously subscribe to but are always, already influenced and participating in—of ineptitude and unintelligence convince us that poverty and homelessness should negate a person’s right or access to comfort. As if to say “Get yourself housed first, then enjoy the reprieve of creature comforts.” My mom agreed. Thanked me for my insight. Got off the call and immediately phoned my sister.

Mom called me back about an hour later and shared that my sister contacted the homeless liaison who was already aware of her situation but did not have a working

telephone number or email address. The kids were scheduled to be picked up at the hotel and brought to school for the remainder of the school year.

The summer came and went. My sister, her husband, and their three children found housing where they could. The hotel only served as home for about two months. Most places that serve as temporary housing for families experiencing homelessness put limits on the number of days a family can stay (Gilderbloom, Squires, & Wuerstle, 2013; Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Kozol, 1988). I know that in the past year they have lived in a house, a shelter, a hotel, and most recently, a campsite. Through it all, the kids have stayed in school and made adequate progress towards the next grade.

Mapping the Literature Landscape of Student Homelessness

I know only part of my sister's story, but I know enough to be able to speak of how she and her school-aged children are so much more than *just* homeless. Her story and the other stories shared throughout this dissertation serve as an entry point into a funnel of sorts that ultimately brings us to the experiences of the young adolescent participant in this study. Homelessness is a condition, not a defining characteristic. People experiencing homelessness have been dehumanized to a point that dominant narratives overpower individual identities (Kim, 2013). This research project seeks to bring humanizing research (Paris, 2011) and funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2016) together to re-humanize the identities and challenge the dominant narratives surrounding homelessness. Two research questions guide the inquiry:

1. What funds of identity do students experiencing homelessness possess?
2. How are these funds of identity supported, if at all, by school structures and personnel?

Figure 2.1 depicts the thought process and organization of this chapter. The chapter began with a personal connection to homelessness. That personal connection serves as an entry into the chapter's content, which is first and foremost anchored by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 (2015) definition of student homelessness. The MV definition of homeless is used by schools and education agencies and differs from the more widely known and referenced Department of Housing and Urban Development definition (MV, 2015; United States Department of Housing and Urban Development [USHUD], 2011). The overarching MV anchor definition of student homelessness paves the way for deeper discussion of national, state, and local statistics on student homelessness after which I present the history, goals, and a critique of MV. Then I provide an examination of literature related to youth experiencing homelessness. As depicted in Figure 2.1, the dotted line that surrounds all of this chapter's content represents how I locate this dissertation study within the bounds of middle level education research. Then, in conclusion, I summarize the chapter's content.

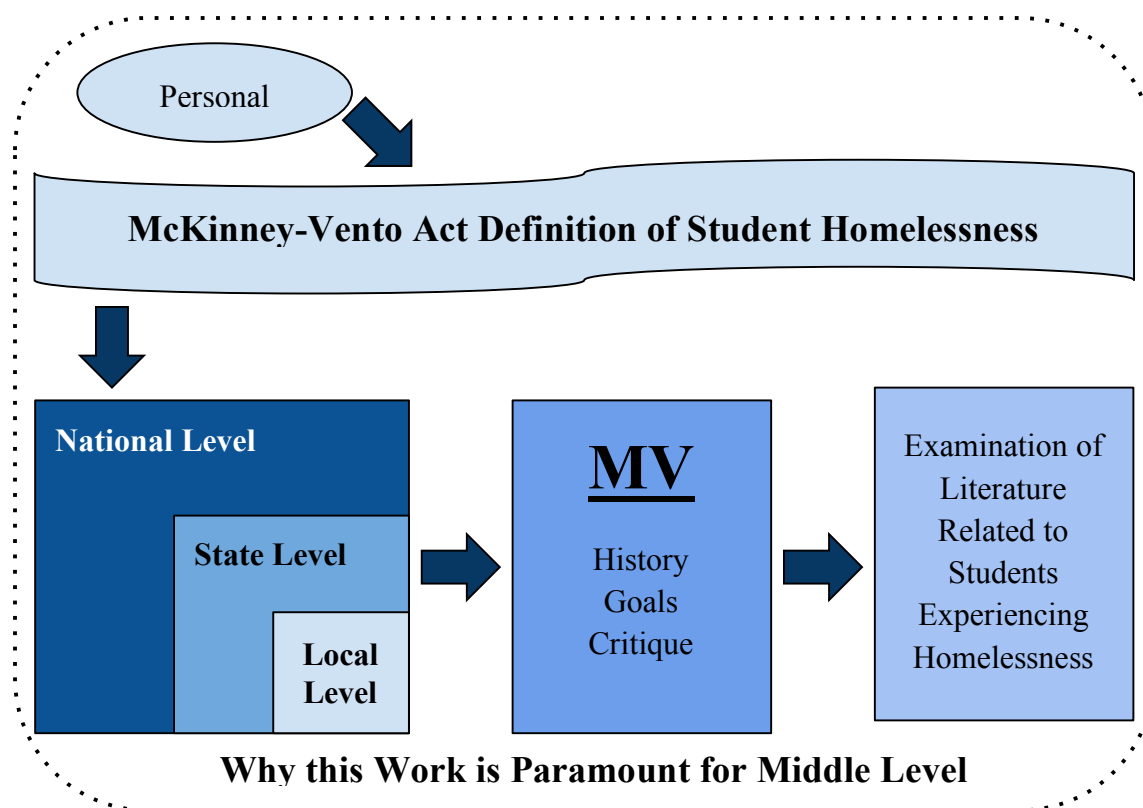


Figure 2.1. Flow chart of the organization of this chapter's content.

What is Homelessness and Who is “Homeless”?

Dominant societal narratives, the single stories that surround homelessness, are perpetuated by popular culture depictions in movies and television shows, the media's single sided shock-journalism, and anecdotal narratives (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001; Phelan, Link, Moore, & Stueve, 1997; Pimpare, 2017a; Toolis & Hammack, 2015). Poverty and homelessness have become common place. Homelessness is everywhere and nowhere at the same time, the individuals who experience it are positioned as less than and rendered invisible (Harris & Fiske, 2006). The stigma of homelessness carries with it “the cultural narrative of homelessness as rooted in personal failure” which students must navigate as they progress through life (Toolis & Hammack, 2015). Homelessness, as described by Kim (2013), brings specific images to mind and rarely do these images

involve school-aged children. The absence of school-aged (or younger) children in images brought to mind demonstrates just how paramount working with and for students experiencing homelessness is in educational spaces. Homelessness has numerous definitions, and in order to progress further I must first present the definition of homelessness that will be used throughout this dissertation.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, the federal legislation that speaks directly to the education and support of children and youth experiencing homelessness, provides a national standard definition of homeless that all public schools must use. Homeless children and youth are defined as any individual who lacks a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” (MV, 2015, § 725). Because of the subjectivity of “adequate,” MV elaborates that the above mentioned definition includes children and youth who

- share the housing of other persons due to financial hardship, also known as “doubled-up”;
- are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds;
- are living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- are abandoned in hospitals;
- are awaiting foster care placement;
- have a primary nighttime residence that is not designed as regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

- live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard⁸ housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
- or are classified as migratory children who qualify as homeless.

Each of these circumstances qualifies an individual under the MV definition of homelessness, pushing back against the dominant narratives that describe those experiencing homelessness as only those who live on the street or in shelters.

Table 2.1
Definitions of who qualifies for homeless services⁹

	
United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (USHUD)	United States Department of Education (USDOE)
Definition	Definition
a person who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence	individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence
Who qualifies?	Who qualifies?
Individuals and families who: • lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes a subset for an individual who resided in an emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;	Children and youths who: • share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; • live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; • live in emergency or transitional

⁸ The subjectiveness of terms like substandard or even trailer parks needs to be addressed in the law. What is meant by trailer park? It almost seems like a completely classist move to proclaim that people living in trailer parks are technically homeless.

⁹ USHUD and USDOE logos retrieved from State of Utah Broadband Outreach Center (2016) and USDOE (2017) respectively.

- will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence;
 - unaccompanied youth and families with children and youth who are defined as homeless under other federal statutes who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition; and
 - individuals and families who are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member.
- shelters;
 - are abandoned in hospitals;
 - await foster care placement;
 - have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
 - live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
 - migratory children who live in circumstances described above.
-

Note. Definitions were obtained from USHUD (2011, p. 75995) and MV (2015, § 725).

MV's definition is nearly word for word the same as the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition (see Table 2.1). The only apparent difference is MV says "a person" and HUD says "individuals." The differences between the two definitions go much further, however, and actually result in sizable disparities between recorded estimates of the population of individuals experiencing homelessness. MV's definition only includes school-aged youth or younger. Also, the MV definition, unlike HUD's definition, includes youth who share housing with other individuals or families as a result of financial hardship (MV, 2015; United States Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD], 2011). This inclusion can partly explain the overwhelming difference between documented numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness as reported by HUD (almost 550,000) and MV (1.3 million) (MV, 2015; Henry, Watt, Rosenthal, & Shivji, 2016). HUD chooses to use a "point in time" count one night per year as the official count of individuals experiencing homelessness. In that count, HUD only looks at those who are in shelters and those who are living on the street, in effect using a dominant narrative to substantially narrow the

population that is included and likely vastly underestimate the number of people experiencing homelessness in the U.S. (Rahman, Turner, & Elbedour, 2015).

In keeping with my effort to push back against dominant narratives, I use the MV definition of homeless for this study. It was intentionally chosen because of its inclusion in educational policy and most recently with its reauthorization through the Every Student Succeeds Act (King, 2016).

Confusion exists as a result of MV's definition of homelessness. Some living conditions described by MV, like being "doubled-up," differ from traditional and dominant views of homelessness. This difference is difficult to reconcile for teachers and educators who believe that students fitting the MV definition may not actually be homeless according to their personal definitions, which typically encompass only those who are completely unsheltered (Hallett, Low, & Skrla, 2015; Hallett, Skrla, & Low, 2015; Kim, 2013; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2008, 2011). Speaking directly to these concerns, Julianelle and Foscarinis (2003) elaborate on MV's definition of homeless and describe the severity of each case. They state, for example, that emergency shelters and motels/hotels often limit the length of stay for individuals and families resulting in "virtually constant mobility" (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003, p. 41). They describe doubled-up residences with similar instability. Hosts could potentially decide to retract housing offers based on personal preference or tie the offer to unethical or illegal ultimatums that put youth in awkward and dangerous circumstances, a finding also reported by Hallett (2011). When considering other housing options outlined by the MV definition, Julianelle and Foscarinis state that these locations (e.g., abandoned buildings, cars, or structures not designed to serve as human housing) are "grossly inadequate and

often unsafe” (2003, p. 41). Once shelter is acquired, safety is not confirmed (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003). Supports must still be provided to alleviate the stresses and impacts of homelessness.

Homelessness by the Numbers

Although the intention of this dissertation work is to focus in on the experiences of young adolescents identified as homeless in a single community, I must first zoom out and present the widespread national severity of homelessness in general. Though individual experiences are lost in a sea of statistics, those numbers paint a very telling picture. The three sections that follow—Homelessness Across the Nation, Homelessness Across Georgia, and Homelessness in the Greater North Fork Area—present data on populations, living conditions, and financial support provided to help alleviate the stresses of homelessness.

Homelessness at the National Level

Data at the national level are available from multiple organizations and reports. For the purposes of this study, I chose to use the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Federal Data Summary for school years 2012-2015 (NCHE, 2016). In order to maintain consistency with data available at the state and local level, I used information from the 2014-2015 school year since it was the most recent school year with available data from all three levels. The numbers presented here should be read as conservative estimates of the actual total number of students from public schools experiencing homelessness. Population totals may be under-reported due to complications with reporting in multiple states (NCHE, 2016). Alabama, for example, experienced technical difficulties that resulted in more than a 10% decrease in population

of students experiencing homelessness (NCHE, 2016). California switched to a new data management system and the records of students experiencing homelessness were not automatically transferred and those students are thus unaccounted for (California Department of Education, 2016). Population totals may also be under-reported because of the requirement that a student must be officially identified as homeless to be included in the count (NCHE, 2016). Some students who qualify for services are reluctant to self-identify or are unaware that services and supports are available (e.g., Hallett, 2011, 2012).

Students experiencing Homelessness in USA

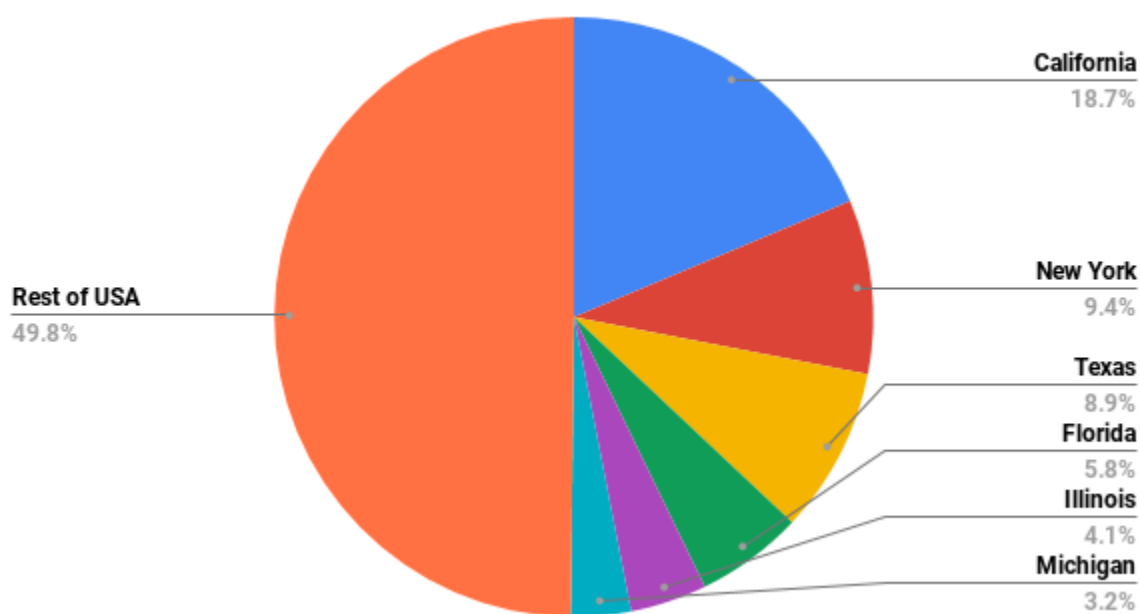


Figure 2.2. Visualization of students experiencing homelessness in USA by state. Data obtained from EHCY Data Summary 2014-2015 (NCHE, 2016).

Student homelessness impacts every corner of the United States, including Puerto Rico. The EHCY data summary report states that there were nearly 1.3 million students experiencing homelessness enrolled in public schools during the 2014-2015 school year

(NCHE, 2016). As demonstrated in Figure 2.2, more than 50 percent of the students experiencing homelessness were reported from only six states: California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and Michigan. With more than 235,000 identified students experiencing homelessness, California has more students identified as homeless than the sum total of students experiencing homelessness from the 28 states with the fewest number of identified cases plus Washington, D.C., and Puerto Rico (222,408 students).

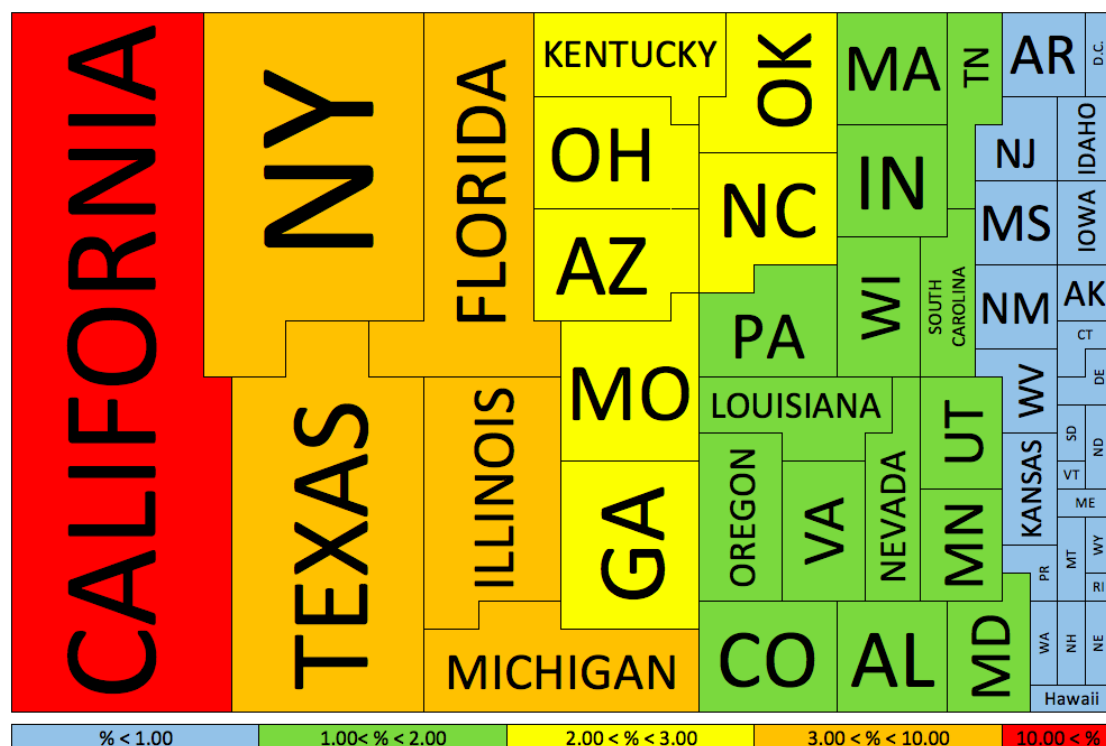


Figure 2.3. Visual depiction of student homelessness population by state.

Figure 2.3 provides a visual representation of the population of students experiencing homelessness in each state. I divided the graphic above into 1000 equal sized pieces. California is composed of 187 pieces. New York has 94. Texas has 90. Florida has 58. Illinois has 42. Michigan has 33. Together, these six states account for more than 50% of the students experiencing homelessness in the United States. The remaining 44 states (plus D.C. and Puerto Rico) are represented by 496 pieces (NCHE,

2016). Although California, New York, Texas, Florida, Illinois, and Michigan are six of the most populated states in the country, a disproportionality exists between their population of students experiencing homelessness and their state population. While these six states account for more than 50% of the country's students experiencing homelessness, the same six states only represent 40% of the country's total population. The discrepancy between percentage of total population and students experiencing homelessness indicates that homelessness occurs in these states at a higher rate than would be the case if homelessness was divided proportionally among states according to population.

Given requirements outlined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, states or districts may apply for grants in order to support students experiencing homelessness (MV, 2015). The EHCY data summary shares grant funding information by state. The national average of funds provided per student identified as homeless was \$50 (NCHE, 2016). Puerto Rico was granted the most funding per student at \$460 dollars per student followed by Washington (\$292 per student), Rhode Island (\$220 per student), Connecticut (\$161 per student), and New Jersey (\$147 per student). The states with the least amount of funding per student were Oklahoma and Utah, which both averaged \$26 per student. The next four states were Oregon and Colorado at \$27, Nevada (\$30), and California (\$32). Even Puerto Rico's \$420 per student per year seems like an inadequate amount of money to level the playing field with classmates not experiencing homelessness. Figure 2.4 presents these funding differences pictorially and the complete funding and population table can be found in Appendix A.

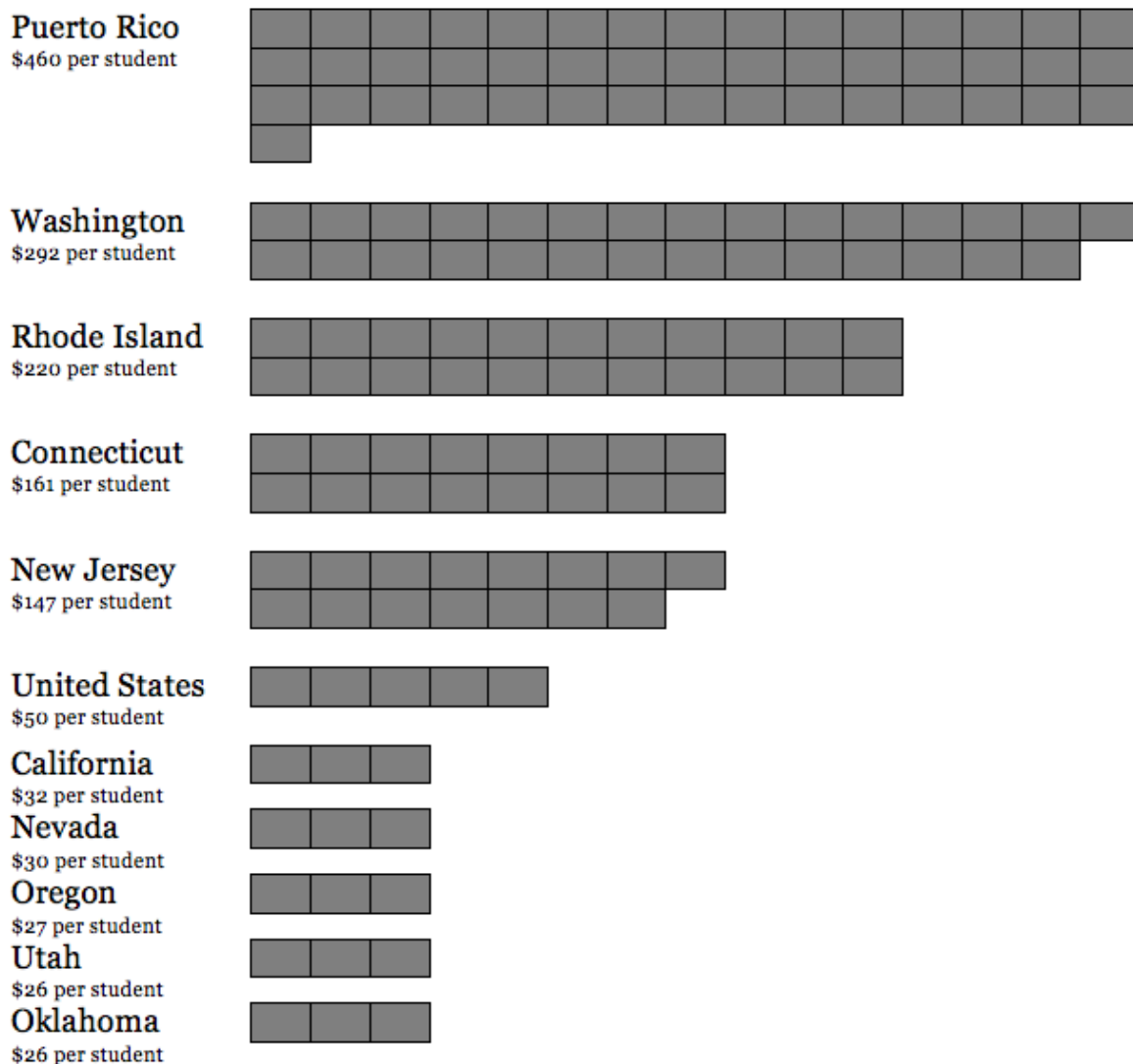


Figure 2.4. Visualization of federal grant dollars provided to states per student. Each box represents \$10. The dollars are not granted to the states with the intention of dividing it evenly among each student, but, if the money were divided evenly, the visual describes those amounts (NCHE, 2016).

The data recording requirements of MV stipulate that districts and states must report a given student's living situation using MV's definition of "homeless," which includes children and youth who lack a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" (MV, 2015, § 725). The data document four housing categories: hotels/motels,

unsheltered, doubled-up, and shelters/transitional housing/awaiting foster care placement (NCHE, 2016). According to NCHE (2016), the vast majority of students experiencing homelessness share housing with others (76%). This 76% represents nearly one million youth who are not considered homeless under the HUD (Henry et al., 2016) definition and dominant societal narratives. The next highest percentage of students experiencing homelessness are found within emergency and transitional shelters (14%), followed by residing in hotels or motels (7%), and unsheltered (3%). The majority of youth experiencing homelessness are accompanied by at least one parent or guardian but percentages of unaccompanied youth are increasing across the board and “make up 10% or more of the homeless student population in 23 states” (NCHE, 2016, p. iv).

Kindergarten was the grade with the highest number of students identified as experiencing homelessness with 118,684 students (~9%), and the eleventh grade had the lowest number of students identified as experiencing homelessness at 68,740 (~5%). According to grade bands, the early grades (K-3), middle grades (4-8), and high school (9-12) accounted for 36, 35, and 26 percent respectively. An additional 42,201 students (~3%) were between three and five years old or ungraded.

Homelessness at the State Level

Georgia, the nation’s eighth most populous state, receives the eighth most funds from MV grants, and has the seventh most students experiencing homelessness (NCHE, 2016). As a requirement of MV, each state must maintain a record of their students experiencing homelessness and create a report to be shared publicly (MV, 2015). The data presented in this section all come from Georgia’s *McKinney-Vento Program: 2015 Data Report* (Georgia Department of Education [GADOE], 2016). Georgia’s data report

represents the 2014-2015 school year, the same school year of the national data report. This data report was chosen so that a consistency would exist between national and state data sources. The report states that Georgia has more than 39,000 students experiencing homelessness. The majority of those students, similar to national statistics, are identified as doubled-up (71%). With regards to race and ethnicity, 58 percent are Black, 29 percent are White, and eight percent are Hispanic. Four out of the top five school systems that received grant funding from the state of Georgia to aid in the success of students experiencing homelessness were in the greater Atlanta area: Gwinnett County, DeKalb County, Clayton County, and Atlanta Public Schools. These four districts account for nearly a quarter of the students experiencing homelessness in the state.

Georgia has 159 counties and 181 different school districts (GADOE, 2016). Of those 181 school districts, 17 reported 0.00% of their students experienced homelessness, which left 164 districts with some population of students experiencing homelessness. Only 50 out of 164 districts received grant funding from the state to address homelessness within their school system. No information was provided about the number of districts that applied for grant funds. Georgia received \$1.87 million from the federal government to help provide services to students experiencing homelessness. This money was divided among 50 school systems, meaning that 114 districts with students experiencing homelessness received no additional funding to support the needs of this vulnerable population. If every federal dollar was divided evenly among students, the average amount of grant funded dollars per student in the state would have been just over \$47.52. Since the money was not divided as such, the average granted per student varied dramatically among districts. For example, Gwinnett County Schools, with the largest

population of students experiencing homelessness of the 50 districts that received grant funds, was awarded \$71,543, an average of \$28.65 per student experiencing homelessness. Clay County schools on the other hand, the district with the smallest population of students experiencing homelessness that received grant funds, received \$27,710 to provide extra services for their 27 students experiencing homelessness. That averages out to more than \$1,026 per student¹⁰. The drastic difference between 28 and 1,000 extra dollars per student per school year begs the question: What is really being done to end student homelessness?

The breakdown of Georgia's population followed a pattern similar to national statistics. Kindergarten (3,938 or roughly ten percent) had the highest number of students experiencing homelessness and the eleventh grade (1,571 or four percent) had the lowest. According to grade bands, the early grades (K-3) and middle grades (4-8) both accounted for nearly the same percentage of students experiencing homelessness (38 percent) and high school (9-12) accounted for 22 percent.

The Georgia report provided some information that was not included in the national report. One such measurement was titled *barriers to enrollment and success of homeless students experienced by local education agencies (LEAs)*. Homeless liaisons from across the state were asked to force rank (1=most effective, 17=least effective) the effectiveness of programs or resources at "removing barriers to success and full participation in school for homeless students" (p. 20). The most frequently cited barrier to enrollment and success was transportation followed by records of immunizations and

¹⁰ These numbers are shocking but there are numerous variables that we, as readers of a publicly available data report, are not privy to. We do not know what the grant funds can be spent on, and we also do not know what sorts of supports are already in place in each of these locations.

previous school data. The Georgia report also included an effectiveness ranking of educational and school-related activities provided to homeless students by grant recipients. According to homeless liaisons in districts and schools, the most effective barrier-removing activities in Georgia were, in order from most to least effective: transportation (1), school supplies (2), tutoring (3), staff professional development (4), and clothing (5). The least effective were expedited evaluations (16), early childhood programs (15), addressing the needs of students who have witnessed or been victims of domestic violence (14), counseling services (13), and school records transfer (12). The report does not define the barrier-removing activities or describe how the activities are enacted and no rationale is provided for activities that received no ranking. One hypothesis would be that implementing those activities was not universal across school districts. The full results can be found in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2
Educational and School-Related Activities Provided to Homeless Students by Grant Recipients

Activity	Average effectiveness ranking
Transportation	4.0
School supplies	4.4
Tutoring	5.2
Staff professional development and awareness	6.0
Clothing to meet a school requirement	7.1
Parent education related to rights and resources for children	7.7
Coordination between schools and agencies	8.7
Referrals for medical, dental, and other health services	8.9
Assistance with participation in school programs	9.2

Referral to other programs and services	9.6
Obtaining or transferring records necessary for enrollment	10.2
Counseling	11.7
Addressing needs related to domestic violence	13.1
Early childhood programs	13.6
Expedited evaluations	13.9
Before-school, after-school, mentoring, and summer programs	No Ranking

Note. Adapted from Georgia's *McKinney-Vento Program: 2015 Data Report* (GADOE, 2016). Homeless liaisons from across the state were asked to force rank (1=most effective, 17=least effective) the effectiveness of programs or resources at "removing barriers to success and full participation in school for homeless students" (p. 20). No rationale was provided for before-school, after-school, mentoring, and summer programs not receiving a ranking.

Although this information is informative, critically minded readers are left to wonder about the effectiveness ratings. For example, the rankings bring to mind two different points. The first is that there is no means by which liaisons are trained to consistently rank effectiveness from district to district. There may be some programs that are not in place in each district. With no mention of how the rankings were determined or a bias related to inconsistent training accounted for, these rankings potentially are problematic. The second, and more important from the viewpoint of this dissertation study, is that individuals who are benefitting from these services were not asked if they felt that the services were effective. If a student or her family is experiencing homelessness, their opinion on whether or not services are effective should be the first and most important opinion to collect. By virtue of key omissions, these statewide data reports point back to the purpose of this dissertation study: to seek out the opinions and experiences of the experts who live with and in homelessness.

Homelessness at the Local Level

North Fork School District (NFSD) is a relatively small (land wise) school district in northeast Georgia. The school district enrolls almost 14,000 students in 14 elementary schools, four middle schools, and three high schools. Though the district benefits in some ways due to the presence of a large land-grant public research university, NFSD is hampered by a lack of property taxes on roughly 50% of its geographic area (Director of NF area homeless shelter, personal communication, July 14, 2016). NFSD has seen considerable growth in its population of students experiencing homelessness over the course of the past four school years. During the 2011-2012 school year, there were 276 identified students and in 2014-2015, the most recent year that data were available, that number has ballooned to 698 (GADOE, 2016). The average increase per year was 37%. The NFSD homeless liaison believes that the increase in student homelessness numbers can be traced to two factors: students who have always been enrolled in NFSD schools are finally coming forward in order to seek assistance, and district personnel are better able to identify individuals who could benefit from services (NFSD homeless liaison, personal communication, October 3, 2016).

For the sake of anonymity, NFSD's rankings and grant funds received will not be exact. NFSD was one of the 50 school districts in the state of Georgia that received MV grant funding. The district was awarded more than \$35,000 in 2014-2015 to provide services to its students, which translates to roughly \$50 per student for that year (GADOE, 2016). This amount per student is consistent with the national average and slightly more (+\$2.50) than the average per student in Georgia. Seventy-eight percent of the students experiencing homelessness in North Fork are African-American, 9% are

White, and just under 6% are Hispanic. Twelve percent are experiencing homelessness without the presence of an adult, and 23% qualify for disability services in addition to their experiences of homelessness (GADOE, 2016). The most recent version of NFSD's strategic plan states that one of their goals is to form strong collaborative relationships with caregivers, faculty, staff, and community members to support students' academic and social growth and development and physical well-being (NFSD, 2017). Although the district cites services they provide to students experiencing homelessness as evidence of successfully accomplishing this strategic goal, the district does not elaborate on services provided or explain concrete steps taken to address student homelessness.

The national, state, and local statistics demonstrate the widespread nature of student homelessness in schools across the country. The statistics describe a population that is already sizable (1.3 million nationally and 39,000 in Georgia) and lacks significant funding to address their physical, emotional, and educational needs (GADOE, 2016; NCHE, 2016). The trouble with statistics is that individuals get lost in the numbers. Students experiencing homelessness exist in urban, rural, and suburban schools. Regardless of whether or not a school enrolls students experiencing homelessness, dominant societal perceptions and misconceptions of homelessness persist. Preparing teachers to work in deficit-saturated locations with and for students experiencing homelessness is of vital importance. Students experiencing homelessness are not a homogenous group and should not be viewed as one (Hallett, 2012). There may be similar experiences shared between individuals who have been identified as experiencing homelessness, but the myriad of variables that lead to their lived experiences cannot be discerned through a spreadsheet or large tables in a data report. Presenting statistics in

this way should not be viewed as a generalizing move but rather as a call to action to listen to, share, and promote the stories and experiences of these students. Considering these statistics about homelessness, the section that follows describes the origin of MV, how it is enacted at different levels of government, and a critique of the act and how it is enacted.

McKinney-Vento: The Federal Response to Homelessness

The federal government addresses the increased need for understanding of, and support for, students experiencing homelessness through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 (MV, 2015). Homelessness impacts students in a myriad of ways including but not limited to the following: a disconnect from school and social services (Biggar, 2001; Miller, 2012, Hallett, 2011); mental and physical health (Miller, 2011; Anooshian, 2003; Jullianelle & Foscarinis, 2003); and long-term financial stability (Biggar, 2001). MV seeks to address these impacts for the benefit of students experiencing homelessness.

McKinney-Vento's Origin and Purpose

Originally adopted in 1987 as the Stewart B. McKinney Act, MV was “the first comprehensive federal response to homelessness” (Foscarinis, 1991, p. 1234). It was signed into law during the Reagan administration, which had apparently been in denial about the presence of homelessness. At this stage, MV’s lack of specificity and formal definition of homelessness did little to address the needs of populations experiencing homelessness outside of emergency assistance (Foscarinis, 1991). McKinney-Vento was reauthorized under the No Child Left Behind Act in 2002 (NCLB, 2002) and that reauthorization established a standard definition of homeless. In the absence of that

standard definition from 1987 to 2002, numerous students and families were left unserved over the first 15 years of MV's existence (Miller, 2012). Since 1987, MV has undergone numerous updates and revisions, most recently with the passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) (King, 2016; ESSA, 2015). Broadly, the purpose of MV is to “ensure that children who are experiencing homelessness have equal access to public education and that state and district-level policies and practices remove all barriers to student enrollment, attendance, participation, and achievement” (Miller, 2012, p. 809). Crook (2015) relays that the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program (EHCY), the portion of MV that is housed within the Department of Education, has four distinct requirements of state and LEAs. First, “the Act expressly prohibits a school from segregating a homeless child simply because he or she is homeless” (Crook, 2015, p. 403). Second, to encourage stability within a school, MV requires policies that ensure transportation to and from their school of origin, meaning the school that students were enrolled in when they first experienced homelessness (Crook, 2015). The third requirement gives power to the parent or guardian of the student to decide what school they should be enrolled in (Crook, 2015). Lastly, schools must allow the child to remain in their school of origin unless they, or their parent/guardian, decide that a move should occur (Crook, 2015). How MV is enacted differs at the varying levels of government and is explained below.

McKinney-Vento at the National Level

At times, MV has been thought of as “an unfunded mandate” (Wong et al., 2009, p. 6) that does little to support states and districts with its implementation. According to the policy itself, the U.S. Secretary of Education holds the authority to provide states with

grant funds in order to accomplish the policy's requirements (MV, 2015). Each year, the Secretary of Education compiles a report with the data reported from each state about the prevalence of homelessness in U.S. public schools, the academic standing of students experiencing homelessness, and the grant funding provided to states and territories to support MV's goals. As stated previously, the amount of funding that each state is granted is not proportional to the number of students experiencing homelessness within their public schools, but overall the average funding provided per student experiencing homelessness per year was \$50 (NCHE, 2016).

McKinney-Vento at the State Level

There exists some variability in how states enact MV, but some aspects of the law must be followed in each state and territory. Each state must establish an Office of the Coordinator of Education for Homeless Children and Youths (MV, 2015). The staff in this office must gather and disseminate reports describing the severity of homelessness and what schools are doing to address it; develop statewide plans to address the barriers impacting students; serve as the contact with the U.S. Secretary of Education on all things related to homeless education; collaborate with social service agencies and education stakeholders; and act as the point of reference for LEAs (MV, 2015). As described in the statistics section, this work could include awarding funds to districts for the support of students experiencing homelessness, but in the case of Georgia, only 50 of the state's 164 districts reporting instances of student homelessness were awarded funds.

McKinney-Vento at the School District Level

The work that is done at the national and state levels pales in comparison to work that is performed by local education agency homeless liaisons. Each homeless liaison—a

position that is mandated by the federal government (Wilkins, Mullins, Mahan, & Canfield, 2016)—is responsible for homelessness services and programming for the entire district. According to MV (2015), local liaisons are responsible for ensuring that students experiencing homelessness are identified by schools and other agencies so that students and their families can enroll in school and so that they can receive appropriate services. Additionally, liaisons must provide education opportunities for educators, social service agencies, and the parents/guardians of students experiencing homelessness about the students' educational rights and opportunities (MV, 2015). The title of Homeless Liaison is often grafted onto an already overcrowded job description (Cunningham, 2014). For example, with its three high schools, four middle schools, 14 elementary schools, and nearly 14,000 students, North Fork School District has one liaison who is responsible for every child identified as homeless in the district, nearly 700 for the 2014-2015 school year according to the GADOE (2016). Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the largest district in California, has over 800 schools and only one homeless liaison (Tierney & Hallett, 2010). In 2017, LAUSD enrolled more than 17,000 students experiencing homelessness (Chandler, 2017). Disjointed expectations, inconsistent funding, and lack of authority often amount to under appreciation and feelings of isolation for homeless liaisons (Cunningham, 2014; Hallett, Skrla, & Low, 2015).

Critiquing the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Children experiencing homelessness are among the most vulnerable members of the United States population. Extreme poverty and homelessness could impact children as early as during their mothers' pregnancies and at each level of their educational journey. Most often, these impacts manifest as poor academic achievement (Biggar, 2001; Miller,

2011). Citing research about children living in poverty and homelessness, Biggar (2001) states “poor children are more likely than others to drop out of school, and students who discontinue school prematurely suffer financially and socially. They share the weight of these burdens with society at large” (p. 954). Students experiencing homelessness frequently have unrecognized and unmet educational needs that, when coupled with the lack of stable relationships due to increased mobility in the search for sustainable housing, make the advocacy and funding that MV provides even more vital (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003). Work must be undertaken to help districts identify students experiencing homelessness, especially those with disabilities (Markward & Biros, 2001).

One of the main issues described in studies concerning MV is the lack of information about how MV impacts day-to-day operations in classrooms and the experiences of youth identified as homeless (Wilkins et al., 2016). Inconsistent funding and lack of stakeholder education on the definition of homelessness greatly diminish the impact of MV supports (Hallett, Skrla, & Low, 2015). Despite being a wide reaching policy, MV does nothing to end homelessness itself, nor does it provide enough resources to make success in school a likely possibility. Society at large must recognize how paying lip service to homelessness does little if anything to challenge dominant narratives.

Systems that contribute to the perpetuation of dominant narratives must be confronted.

Examination & Critique of Literature on Youth Homelessness

Homelessness is not solely an issue located within the walls of public schools across the United States. Likewise, literature on homelessness covers a wide landscape and includes (not exclusively): nursing, pediatrics, public health, anthropology, behavioral sciences, social work, psychiatry, government policy, economics, law, and

education. With such a wide base of literature to pull from, this section of the chapter seeks to provide a broad description of the work that is being done with and for students experiencing homelessness.

The literature found can be divided into three broad categories: policy analyses of MV, experiences of youth identified as homeless, and education stakeholders and homelessness. The policy analyses of MV, having already been elaborated, will not be further discussed unless it is pertinent to one of the other two categories of research. The experiences of youth identified as homeless has three sub categories: the importance of home, voices challenging dominant narratives, and health concerns for those experiencing homelessness. The education stakeholders and homelessness section also has three sub categories: fixing the problem, fixing the perception, and what is this really accomplishing?

Experiences of Youth Identified as Homeless

The articles that were categorized into this section, “Experiences of Youth Identified as Homeless,” are varied. These pieces represent the voices of youth and families experiencing homelessness in England, Canada, Tanzania, Australia, and all over the United States. Participants for these research studies were recruited through homeless shelters, transitional foster agencies, other social service agencies, and through schools. Data were obtained from available data sets and through researcher-crafted surveys. These studies utilized a wide range of methods and theoretical frames and identified implications for fields including social work, housing, community, health, and policy. In the review of literature, common themes arose in the category of experiences of youth

identified as homeless: the importance of home, voices challenging dominant narratives, and health concerns for those experiencing homelessness.

The importance of home. A movement to end youth homelessness called Housing First stresses the importance of obtaining consistent and reliable housing as the first and most influential factor in ensuring equity. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2016),

The vast majority of homeless individuals and families fall into homelessness after a housing or personal crisis. For these households, the Housing First approach provides them with short-term assistance to find permanent housing quickly and without conditions. In turn, such households often require only brief, if any, support or assistance to achieve housing stability and individual well-being. (para. 3)

Consistent with the statement above, the means by which youth find themselves to be homeless are varied but most often are the result of a housing or personal crisis. In a large-scale study of students experiencing homelessness across the United States, one third of the participants reported some sort of history in foster care (Bender, Yang, Ferguson, & Thompson, 2015). Kennedy (2007) found that violence exposure exacerbates the likelihood of experiencing homelessness. Once homeless, finding an exit that leads to housing security becomes difficult and extremely costly. Opportunities for formal work are few and far between due to a lack of transportation, identification, and stable address, all coupled with employers' reluctance to hire unskilled workers. Job prospects are difficult for older adolescents experiencing homelessness, and subsequently, so is finding stable housing (Karabanow, Hughes, Ticknor, Kidd, &

Patterson, 2010). The McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness includes students who are couch surfing—a subset of what MV calls being doubled-up that includes sleeping on a friend or family member’s couch. In a study of doubled-up youth, Hallett (2012) found that the organization of a doubled-up living situation could positively impact educational outcomes. For example, two families that merged together and shared expenses were found to encourage educational participation more so than two families who only shared a dwelling (Hallett, 2012). Additionally, for unaccompanied youth—students experiencing homelessness separate from their parents or guardians—reunification with families helps prevent future homeless experiences (Braciszewski, Toro, & Stout, 2016).

Voices challenging dominant narratives. Though the reasons behind why an individual experiences homelessness must be addressed, youth voices are often not included in discussions and plans meant to address homelessness. Acknowledging that many programs and policies exist to support youth experiencing homelessness, Aviles de Bradley (2011) shared that “often these approaches exclude the insight of those most affected, the youth themselves. It is critical to include these perspectives in an effort to provide a more thorough understanding of homelessness among youth” (p. 156).

Addressing this gap, Aviles de Bradley conducted interviews with six youth experiencing homelessness in Chicago. The youth themselves could “frame, interpret, and share meaning of their educational experiences” (p. 158) and contribute to the slim body of knowledge relating to youth experiencing homelessness. The interviews revealed the influence of caring adults. Students experiencing homelessness “desire adults in their lives to help them process their experiences, thoughts, and feelings as individuals, but also to address and repair relationships with their parents” (p. 164). Additionally,

participants stated that they do not necessarily identify as “homeless” and consider the label a misnomer. Considering this, Aviles de Bradley suggests that there exists a “need to redefine and re-conceptualize what it means to be homeless” (p. 168), in conjunction with participants experiencing homelessness.

Taking up Aviles de Bradley’s (2011) call for a redefinition and reconstitution of what it means to be homeless, Ellis and Geller (2016) use the term *housing insecurity* when working with and discussing the experiences of youth who have been labeled homeless. Also similar to previously described studies, Ellis and Geller conducted interviews with students using narrative inquiry. Viewing the results through a critical race theory lens, Ellis and Geller’s results further confirmed the importance of supportive adults and provided evidence to counter the false stereotypes that people from low-income families do not care about education and that they are lazy (Gorski, 2012). Speaking specifically about motivation and positive relationships with caring adults, Ellis and Geller (2016) wrote, “The stories the youth shared described their desire to do the work; however, structural barriers made work completion challenging and sometimes impossible. Furthermore, the lack of assistance from teachers discouraged these young people from trying” (p. 599). It is these structural barriers that need addressing in order to cultivate and sustain positive environments for students experiencing homelessness.

Grineski (2014) also presents an alternative to the dominant narrative surrounding homelessness. Grineski’s research challenges deficit perspectives, which Gorski (2011) defines as “approaching students based upon our perceptions of their weaknesses rather than their strengths” (p. 152). Interviews with stakeholders and surveys completed by youth were used in order to pursue “a more holistic narrative that illustrates [children

experiencing homelessness] who act on varied interests, gifts, and talents” (Grineski, 2014, p. 203). The individual ethnographic cases that Grineski presents display an against-the-dominant-narrative description of who these children are and what their lives are like. This work addresses biases and preconceived notions of homelessness, combating beliefs and narratives of pity that can be truly detrimental to motivation and achievement in classrooms.

Students experiencing homelessness are not the only ones who are in need of a narrative makeover. Families experiencing homelessness exist in a society that views them as deviant and often times invisible. Working with youth and families on literacy within a homeless shelter, Jacobs (2014) sought to present stories to challenge these dominant narratives and influence policy with respect to homelessness. Through ethnography and portraiture, Jacobs was able to craft counter portraits that challenge dominant narratives surrounding homelessness. Parents demonstrated a deep desire for their children to succeed in school because of the belief that education will provide a road out of the difficult living situation in which they find themselves. Through the data collection process, Jacobs was also able to promote positive self-image in the parents. Jacobs stated, “Through the act of storytelling parents saw themselves as teachers, learners, role models, and advocates for their children” (p. 184). Taylor, Gibson, and Hurd (2015) stressed the importance of preschool. Through interviews, they documented the largest barriers that limit access to preschool as sufficient housing and relationships with supportive individuals. In a society that demonizes poverty (Giroux, 2012), empowering marginalized individuals is a vital step towards emancipation and sustainable change.

In neoliberal, capitalist, and standardized times, numbers are sexy. Time is a commodity and quantification is thought to be the golden ticket. But, when numbers become the language with which individuals are discussed, faces and identities are lost. Mohan and Shields (2014), using the MV definition of homelessness, conducted interviews and assembled portraits of students written in first person for an added layer of humanity. Their findings demonstrate how the belief that individuals experiencing homelessness suffer from addiction is unfounded, and the influence of school faculty and staff is significant.

It should be stated again, if it was not abundantly clear, that the work that must be done to challenge dominant narratives surrounding homelessness should not rest on the backs of the youth themselves. The work of seeking counter narratives, theorizing them, reporting out on the findings, and alleviating the sting of homelessness should fall squarely within the bounds of humanizing, youth engaged researchers and advocates. Addressing youth homelessness will require collaboration among numerous stakeholders, especially with arguably the most important stakeholders, the youth themselves. Their voices have been virtually excluded from the development of the public perception of homelessness. The work of equity literate educators requires including youth perspectives. A learning environment cannot be equitable if every member of the classroom community does not have the privilege of contributing to the discourse.

Health concerns for those experiencing homelessness. A large group of studies found in this review of literature revolved around the health, both physical and mental, of students experiencing homelessness. Focusing on the health needs of students experiencing homelessness is of vital importance, but not more so than stressing the need

for adult advocates who challenge oppressive systems. For example, in a study of 356 adolescents experiencing homelessness, data reported that regardless of the means by which the participants became homeless, they were equally likely to be victimized on the streets (MacLean, Embry, & Cauce, 1999). Additionally, youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to develop disorders with relation to body weight (Fournier et al., 2009); express a negative attitude about school (Kennedy, 2007); demonstrate behavior problems in school settings (Fowler, Toro, & Miles, 2009); have parents who are perceived as non-supportive (Nott & Vuchinich, 2016); and, if they had experiences in the foster care system, more likely to trade sex for money or drugs (Hudson & Nandy, 2012). Studies related to health painted a very bleak picture and did little to challenge dominant narratives surrounding homelessness.

Although the majority of the studies in this category reported disheartening health results, there were a few that recognized the individuality and strength that exists within youth experiencing homelessness. Oliveira and Burke (2009) believe that for individuals who fled abusive homes, perhaps the victimization experienced on the streets was viewed as being more bearable than in the home setting. Sometimes the decision to live on the street was made rationally and resulted in the development of social capital amongst a group who shared similar experiences (Oliveira & Burke, 2009). McCay and colleagues (2011) also found that connection with others would support mental health among youth experiencing homelessness. These findings echo the call for caring and supportive adults to work with youth experiencing homelessness in educational settings (e.g., Ellis & Geller, 2016; Hallett, 2011). Researchers have documented how students experiencing homelessness exist in school spaces unbeknownst to the teachers they interact with on a

daily basis whether by a teacher's ignorance of the MV definition of homelessness or from a student's blending in with classmates and "passing" as housed (Hallett, Low, & Skrla, 2015; Hallett, Skrla, & Low, 2015; Kim, 2013; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2008, 2011). With so many students experiencing homelessness "passing" as housed within school settings, work with education stakeholders must take place in order to promote caring and supportive relationships with every student.

Education Stakeholders and Homelessness

Beliefs are a tricky thing to measure and make explicit. Personal, cultural and historical locations greatly impact the way we perceive and interact with the world (Jones & Woglom, 2016). Our cultural and historical locations include, but are not limited to, interactions with family, religious beliefs, social class, race, and beliefs about persons or cultures different from one's own. Once initial beliefs are cemented, it can very difficult to change them. Kagan (1992) said that in order for educational programs to challenge and change a person's belief system, the program must require participants to explain their current beliefs in great detail. Then, the program needs to "challenge the adequacy of those beliefs; and ... give novices extended opportunities to examine, elaborate, and integrate new information into their existing belief systems" (p. 77). The work of teacher educators, professional development providers, and researchers seeking to educate stakeholders on student homelessness takes numerous different forms. These programs include professional development or book groups for in-service teachers (Chow, Mistry, & Melchor, 2015; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2008, 2011); partnerships with community-based organizations (Bruce, Chance, & Meulemans, 2015; Miller, Pavlakis, Samartino, & Bourgeois, 2015); work with pre-service teachers (Hallam, Buell, & Ridgley, 2003; Kim,

2013); service-learning or experiential learning (Calabrese Barton, 2000; Johnson, Grazulis, & White, 2014); and researcher partnerships with school district personnel (Hallett, Low, & Skrla, 2015; Hallett, Skrla, & Low, 2015).

Research regarding education stakeholders and homelessness is drawn from multiple fields of study, including teacher education, school psychology, higher education, and social work. The research studies in this section will be divided into three different sub-sections based on their approach to addressing student homelessness. These three subsections include challenging the problem, challenging the perception, and what are we really addressing?

Challenging the problem. Some studies seem to address homelessness in general rather than the individuals experiencing homelessness. Miller and colleagues (2015) utilized organizational brokerage theory and found that strong support networks—consisting of numerous actors operating on school, district, and community levels for the benefit of children experiencing homelessness—can lead to sustainable change. Miller et al. (2015) argue that the solution to homelessness is not one size fits all and lies in between overarching policy and individual narratives and support, a finding echoed by Hallett, Low, & Skrla (2015) in their work with a northern California school district. Lack of alignment between political, administrative, and professional systems will limit the impact of homelessness initiatives (Hallett et al., 2015). Sulkowski (2016) calls for a deeper involvement in advocacy by school psychologists. Although they represent “some of the most knowledgeable professionals in schools about relevant laws that influence schooling, educational service delivery, and the provision of mental health supports” (p.

768), many school psychologists still lack a deep understanding of MV and how its programs and supports should be implemented.

Challenging the perception. Despite the good intentions of those who try to combat extreme poverty, oftentimes a person's deficit-laden perceptions of homelessness have the potential to make or break those efforts in expected and unexpected ways. Pity does little to solve the societal issue of homelessness. Deficit ideologies "explain and justify outcome inequalities—standardized test scores or educational attainment, for example—by pointing to supposed deficiencies within disenfranchised individuals and communities" (Gorski, 2011, p. 153). When operating from a deficit ideology, power and possibility rest in the strategies rather than the people. Gorski (2013b) describes the perils of deficit ideologies when working with students from poverty. Strategies, if employed under the umbrella of deficit ideologies, will render themselves inconsequential because they will do nothing to address the overarching ideology (Gorski, 2013b). Real change comes with challenging the perception of homelessness and those experiencing it.

Changing perceptions and beliefs, as mentioned above, is difficult work (Kagan, 1992). Calabrese Barton (2000) attempted to do just that through service-learning opportunities for pre-service teachers on site at homeless shelters. Pre-service teachers involved in the project shared that these experiences changed their views of what homelessness is. Also working with pre-service teachers, Kim (2013) structured opportunities for pre-service teachers to interact with children and families experiencing homelessness on a personal level. Prior to this work, Kim found that pre-service teachers' beliefs about homelessness mirrored those of dominant society, ignored the idea of children existing in homelessness, and considered children in homelessness "abnormal"

(p. 298). After working with families and children experiencing homelessness, pre-service teachers amended these opinions and beliefs, similar to the Calabrese Barton (2000) findings, and their experiences laid the groundwork for more equitable views and beliefs. Beliefs held by practicing teachers and other school district personnel might prove to be more challenging to address as evidenced by Powers-Costello and Swick (2008, 2011). Recognizing the difficulty in working with teachers on their beliefs about homelessness and speaking directly to the meat of deficit ideology, Powers-Costello and Swick (2008) stated, “Teacher perceptions of children and families who are homeless are especially difficult because our culture tends to see homelessness as a reflection of individual weakness and defect rather than symbolic of social injustice” (p. 241). Hallett, Skrla, and Low (2015), also working with practicing teachers and district personnel, found that even when a district seeks to help every student succeed, individuals holding perceptions antithetical to policies and mandatory services like MV, have the potential to derail any positive impacts.

Beliefs about students experiencing homelessness, though not physical or easily quantifiable, will oftentimes dictate future directions for schools and districts. True change, according to Gorski (2013a), is not possible when the push is solely external and lacks the support of an internal personal belief about the necessity for equity and social justice.

What are we really addressing? Fixing an individual person will never address larger issues of equity in society. In fact, Gorski (2013a) states that solely focusing on the individual would be the exact opposite of equity. Though elements of their study aligned with concepts of equity, Chow, Mistry, & Melchor’s (2015) work with teachers

uncovered how personal bias and beliefs about student and teacher relationships could direct equity efforts towards “fixing” the student experiencing homelessness or the adoption of other deficit views. Some of the implications were directed towards addressing individual teacher-student interactions, a move which would do little to address homelessness in the long run. Hallam et al. (2003) documented the lack of engaged teaching when presenting issues of homelessness in university settings. They found a reliance on lecture and coupled with little hands on experience learning and few or no opportunities to develop ideas different from dominant narratives. Johnson and colleagues (2014) reported on a learning experience on the campus of an American university. Student participants slept outside under the elements to simulate the experience of homelessness. During their night outside they listened to speakers who are members of the local homeless community or who were formerly homeless. The reason why I classify this study as “What Are We Really Addressing?” is because a single night sleeping outside does little to simulate homelessness. Regardless of how powerful the night’s experiences, in the morning the participants have the privilege of returning to stable housing. If, for example, the study had documented sustained involvement with relief organizations or campus wide belief change about homelessness, we may be able to ascertain what sort of impact this event had on members of the university.

Teacher educators, professional development providers, and professors at institutions of higher learning have an obligation to prepare those in their charge for compassionate and empathetic interactions with individuals experiencing homelessness. If their goal is equity and justice, they must work at clearing paths towards addressing the societal structures that make homelessness not just possible, but an overwhelming reality.

Why Focus on Student Homelessness in the Middle Grades?

Society's perception of homelessness and those who experience it, as mentioned above, is antiquated and deeply troubling (e.g., Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001; Kim, 2013; Phelan, Link, Moore, & Stueve, 1997; Pimpare, 2017a; Toolis & Hammack, 2015). This perception simultaneously defines, restricts, and positions homelessness as existing in some *other* place, separate from where people who have access to stable housing congregate and hold conversations. Cloaked in normality (Feuer, 2012), students experiencing homelessness exist in classrooms where misunderstandings of their lived experiences and a disregard for societal conditions that contribute to their inadequate access to stable housing are ignored. When students fail to conform to society's stereotypical perception of who is homeless, teachers ill-prepared for addressing their need for equitable access to education results in perpetuated marginalization. Aviles de Bradley (2011) sees the potential that school communities possess, writing that, "Schools can become vital spaces for students experiencing homelessness, if school administrators, faculty and staff are aware of their needs and are prepared to provide the resources and support that enhance educational outcomes for this group of students" (p. 157). The increased needs for teacher understanding and the representation of students' voices necessitate the significance of research with and for students experiencing homelessness.

This We Believe: Keys to Educating Young Adolescents (TWB) (National Middle School Association [NMSA], 2010) is one of the seminal texts that guides work with young adolescents in middle grades schools. The position paper states that young adolescents, "deserve an education that will enhance their healthy growth as lifelong learners, ethical and democratic citizens, and increasingly competent, self-sufficient

individuals who are optimistic about the future and prepared to succeed in our ever-changing world” (p. 3). TWB calls for middle schools to be developmentally responsive, challenging, empowering, and equitable (NMSA, 2010). DiCicco, Cook, and Faulkner (2016) share that the essential attributes and 16 characteristics of successful schools for young adolescents outlined in TWB, “emphasize the importance of staffing classrooms with teachers specifically prepared to work with the age group” (p. 2). Jackson and Davis (2000) stated that teachers in the middle grades must locate their curriculum within the cultural, historical, and personal interests and needs of the young adolescents. In order to accomplish these directives, teachers must actively seek an understanding of their students’ voices and experiences.

By and large, middle level research has not addressed issues of equity and social justice. In her examination of the 691 articles and book chapters published in four main middle grades specific texts from 2000-2013, Brinegar (2015) found

a dearth of published research in areas that are critical to developing systems and practices meant to support the needs of every young adolescent, including specific populations (e.g., males, African Americans, students with disabilities); diversity (e.g., broad topics related to equity, discrimination, social justice, multicultural education); motivation and engagement; student voice; leadership; and family/community connections. (p. 1)

For example, Brinegar (2015) illuminates the inequity in representations related to rural middle schools. She stated that despite 20% of the US population residing in rural areas, only two of the 691 articles and book chapters addressed the experiences and needs of rural youth. Similarly, Brinegar found that only 1% of published items addressed students

living in poverty versus 22% of the nation's population identified as experiencing poverty. Middle grades research, specifically research published in the main middle grades texts, must pursue, borrowing from TWB, more empowering and equitable research.

This We Believe (NMSA, 2010) describes an empowering education as “providing all students with the knowledge and skills they need to take responsibility for their lives, to address life's challenges, to function successfully at all levels of society, and to be creators of knowledge” (NMSA, 2010, p. 13). Similar to the findings of Aviles de Bradley (2011) about the importance of supportive relationships with adults for students experiencing homelessness, TWB (NMSA, 2010) and *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000) stress the importance of positive relationships between young adolescents and adults. TWB views relationships with caring adults as a foundation for much of its framework (NMSA, 2010). Jackson and Davis (2000) consistently describe the importance of curriculum, teaching methods, and assessments, but they also highlight the importance of dignity and respect, stating “yet, when successful adults are asked what aspect of their education most influenced their later accomplishments, they often cite a special relationship with a teacher” and “relationships with adults form critical pathways for [young adolescents'] learning” (p. 121). Speaking specifically on the motivation and empowerment of students experiencing homelessness that positive relationships with caring adults can generate, Ellis and Geller (2016) wrote, “The stories the youth shared described their desire to do the work; however, structural barriers made work completion challenging and sometimes impossible. Furthermore, the lack of assistance from teachers discouraged these young people from trying” (p. 599). It is these structural barriers (e.g.,

lack of transportation, attendance issues, and exclusionary discipline) that need addressing in order to cultivate and sustain positive environments for students experiencing homelessness.

Middle schools should be designed for the benefit of the students who fill the halls. If a school lacks spaces for students to congregate, students could be led to believe that school has no role in socialization, a point in direct contradiction to TWB (NMSA, 2010) and *Turning Points 2000* (Jackson & Davis, 2000). *This We Believe* (NMSA, 2010) states that “[Y]oung people’s desire for peer acceptance and the need to belong to particular social groups are often intense and sometimes lead to shifting allegiance from adults to peers” (p. 7) and that young adolescents need to “develop the interpersonal and social skills needed to learn, work, and play with others harmoniously and confidently” (p. 12). The text seems to imply that empowerment and personal interest are born out of collaboration, interaction, and positive relationships with peers. Relationships are vital, as Doda (2013) shared: “When relationships are undervalued, middle grades schools and classrooms can become places where young adolescents have difficulty connecting to or investing in school” (p. 341). Collaboration, interaction, and positive relationships manifest themselves in environments that are designed specifically with individuals in mind. Middle schools must be physically designed to meet the needs of their students, not simply as buildings used to “hold” students in between elementary and high school. Additionally, strength for students experiencing homelessness can be found in relationships with others. If school is not seen as a place for students to interact with each other, then it simply becomes another location of transience in a condition marked with inconsistency.

Middle grades schools must be equitable. *This We Believe* defines equitable as, “advocating for and ensuring every student’s right to learn and providing appropriately challenging and relevant learning opportunities for every student” (NMSA, 2010, p. 13). Gorski (2016) describes equity literate educators as individuals who are able to recognize even the most subtle forms of inequity and bias in school environments. He calls for educators to ask the following of themselves:

Do I understand the challenges students experiencing poverty face outside school well enough that I recognize even the subtlest ways in which those challenges are reproduced within schools? Am I capable of recognizing stereotypical depictions of people experiencing poverty when I flip through a textbook under consideration for adoption in my school district? (p. 17).

The young adolescents who populate the halls and classrooms of middle grades schools across the United States must have teachers who actively seek equity. Equity is not a prize that can be actualized but instead must be continuously sought in order to provide the most equitable environment for students. Doda (2013) reminds readers that rhetoric does not always signify reality. There could be an abundance of rhetoric surrounding equity in middle schools but should that equity not come to fruition, “Young people lose hopeful visions of their future when they enter schools that inadvertently create barriers to success” (Doda, 2013, p. 336). When young people lose hope, they “fall prey to many high-risk choices and behaviors that can wreak havoc with their development and capacity to learn and succeed in and out of school” (Doda, 2013, p. 337).

This We Believe’s (NMSA, 2010) call for equity is why work with and for young adolescents experiencing homelessness is of vital importance. As middle grades

educators and researchers, we must be ready and willing to meet the challenges of our classrooms. In order to effectively teach middle grades students, teachers and administrators need to make intentional choices to advocate for young adolescents (NMSA, 2010). Further, we must strive to foster inclusive environments in which students, teachers, and administrators acknowledge and celebrate differences by showing empathy and being fully attentive and responsive to the experiences and viewpoints of students. Students' experiences and viewpoints cannot be heard if students are removed from the learning environment. We must strive to ensure all students are viewed and treated as valued, contributing, and essential members of the school community (NMSA, 2010). Within the walls of our classrooms, we have the opportunity to impact entire communities with our choices.

Conceptual Framework

Influenced by critical constructivism's goal of confronting inequities in access, power, and privilege, this study sought to present a counternarrative, an elaboration on the single-story that influences societal perceptions of homelessness and those who experience it (Bentley, Fleury, & Garrison, 2007; Kincheloe, 2005). The goal is not to reverse the hierarchy described in the previous paragraph but to alter its construction so that the individuals who experience homelessness are an integral part in moving forward with policy and practice considerations in schools and communities. I envision and propose that conversations regarding homelessness—policy, practice, education, and support—include the experiences and expertise present within and from the individuals experiencing homelessness themselves as depicted in Figure 2.6.

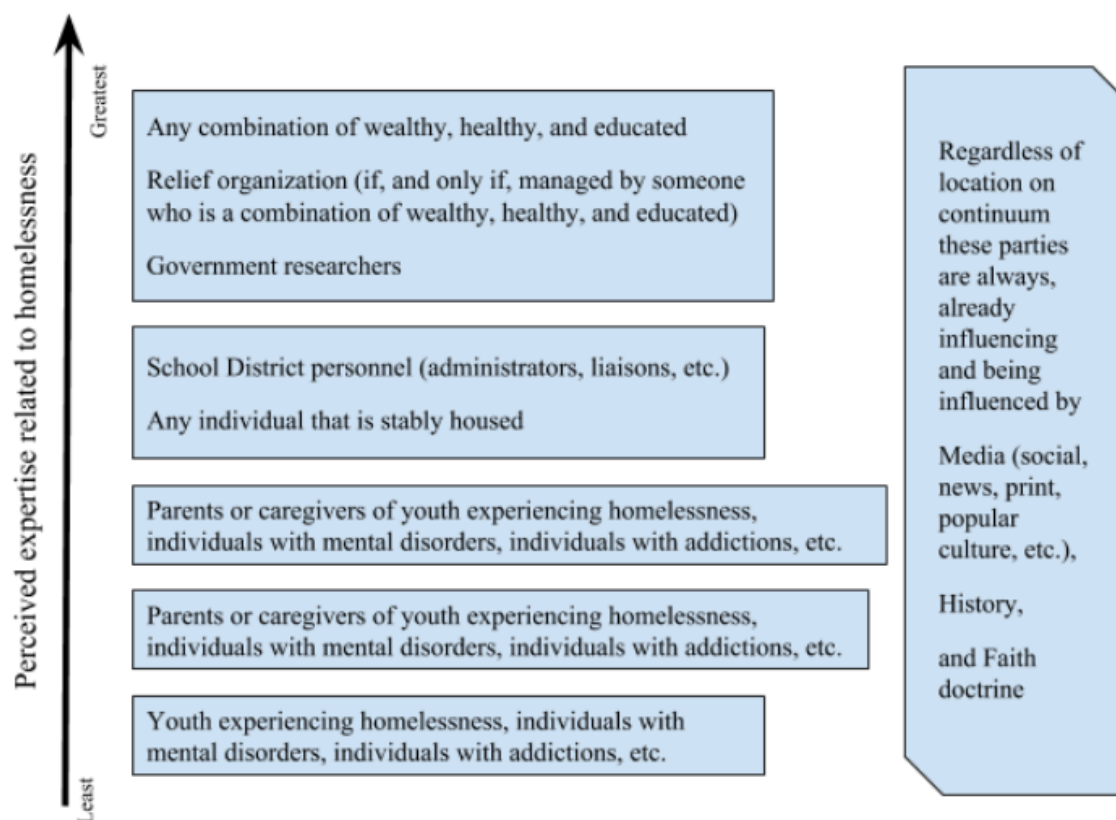


Figure 2.5. Continuum of perceived expertise related to homelessness as interpreted in academic literature and mainstream media.

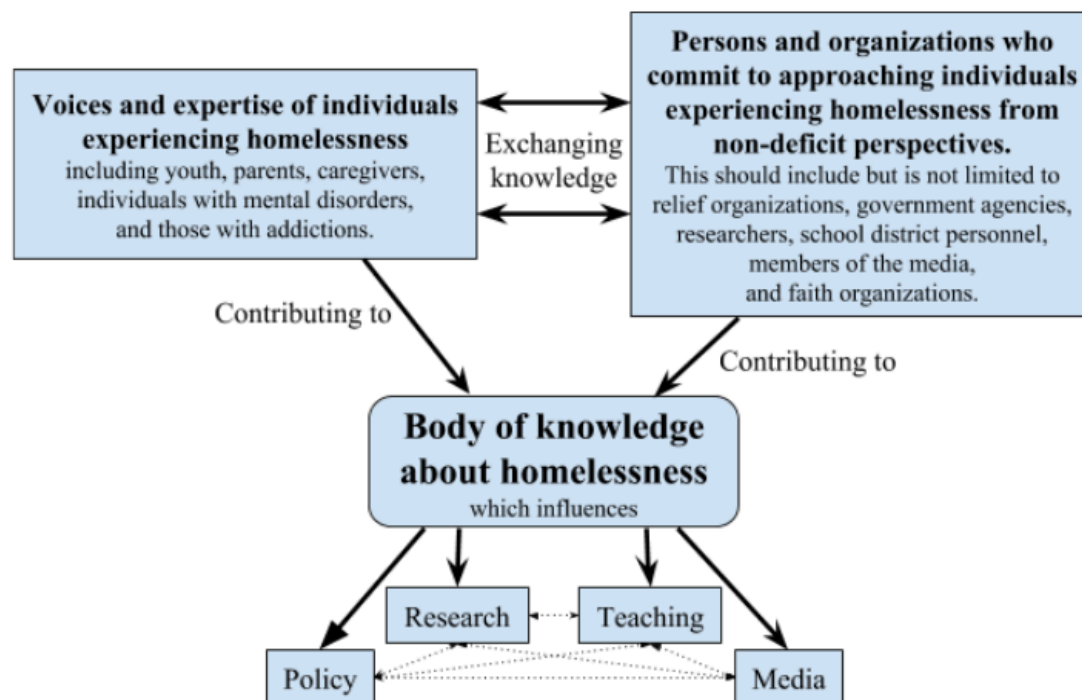


Figure 2.6. Proposed conceptual framework of how knowledge about homelessness should be created and influenced.

Chapter Summary

Kevin Burke once said in a committee meeting that it might be interesting to elaborate on the idea that we all experience homelessness (personal communication, May 16, 2017). I see how that could be an intriguing summary of this chapter. We all experience homelessness. We may not necessarily fit the definitions presented above according to MV or HUD, but we are experiencing it nonetheless. Every time we make an intentional choice to acknowledge individuals with cardboard signs making explicit their categorization, we experience homelessness. Every time we choose to look the other way so as not to make eye contact, we experience homelessness. Every time we perpetuate stereotypes or single stories about homelessness, we experience homelessness. Every time we disregard political or social threats to humanity whether it be cuts to

education, health, or increases in rental prices, we experience homelessness. Every time we enter a classroom and believe that homelessness is somewhere else, separate from, or distant, we experience homelessness. We always, already experience homelessness on a daily basis.

The McKinney Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 has been in effect since 1987 yet most teachers are unaware of its existence. Teachers should be educated about their potential to impact change through MV's provisions and who qualifies for services (Wilkins et al., 2016). MV defines students experiencing homelessness as individuals who lack a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" (MV, 2015, § 725), which includes sharing the housing of other persons (doubled-up); living in temporary locations (e.g. motels, hotels, and campgrounds); emergency and transitional shelters; and nighttime residences that are not designed as accommodation for human beings (e.g. cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations). This definition often contradicts dominant narratives surrounding homelessness because students experiencing homelessness are not older males, suffering from mental illness or addiction, who stand on street corners (Kim, 2013). Despite the federal definition of who qualifies as experiencing homelessness according to MV, the federal legislation has fallen far short of accomplishing its goal of providing services for all students experiencing homelessness in the United States (Miller, 2012).

The National Center for Homeless Education (2016) reported that there were more than 1.3 million students experiencing homelessness enrolled in United States public schools during the 2013-2014 school year. Roughly three quarters of those 1.3

million are doubled-up with other families. At the state level, California, New York, Texas, and Florida, the nation's four most populous states, also enroll the most students experiencing homelessness (NCHE, 2016). Georgia is the nation's eighth most populous state but enrolls the seventh most students experiencing homelessness (GADOE, 2016). The majority of the state's students experiencing homelessness are enrolled in schools in the greater Atlanta metro area. North Fork School District, a small city urban district enrolls nearly 700 students experiencing homelessness. However, key stakeholders at the district and school level believe that number could double should every student who qualifies under the MV definition come forward and self-identify in order to receive services (personal communication, October 3, 2016).

Youth who meet the federal definition of homelessness as defined by MV have rarely had opportunities to be involved in educational research, especially middle level education research. Brinegar's (2015) content analysis of middle level education research found that only seven articles or book chapters, out of 691 (~ 1%) addressed students living in poverty. Students experiencing homelessness, even in the literature, are predominantly positioned as existing in a separate space away from the conversations and unable to take part in the work. This could be due to the difficulty of gaining access to working with students from marginalized and vulnerable populations (Tierney & Hallett, 2010). Those who have made it their purpose to provide opportunities for youth voices to enter academic circles have found that a youth's housing situation impacts their ability in school (Hallett, 2012); relationships with caring adults make a difference (Aviles de Bradley, 2011); and the label of homeless is confining for those who carry its institutional brand (Ellis & Geller, 2016). Researchers must find, make, and demand opportunities for

youth meeting the federal definition of homelessness to join conversations about their education, lives, and stories. Their stories “need audiences, validation, and consideration of how to incorporate them into our classroom settings” (Moulton, 2017, p. 11).

This chapter set the scene and provided the context for our story. Chapter three follows the context by providing readers with a look behind the scenes. AJ’s story is not a work of fiction. Hours of conversations, data construction, analysis, and writing were informed by an intricately woven theoretical, conceptual, and methodological frame. The next chapter will further elaborate upon these structures.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS

Rewarded for Effort

It was probably close to 2:45 pm that Kyrie and I found our way to a booth in a fast-food restaurant in this small city in the southeastern United States. Kyrie is a seventh grader at Riverside Middle School and fits the federal government's definition of experiencing homelessness. He should have been in school but had been suspended "for his own safety" to curb possibilities of a fight. Our food arrived. We chatted and ate. Sketched pictures and drew maps. After Kyrie's map was finished, I asked him to walk me through his typical Riverside Middle School day. He started in the front office and said "I usually come in through the front office and then head into the cafeteria. Well, actually I walk in from the school bus entrance through the old gym and into the cafeteria." Seemed typical enough, but I knew that his current living situation was in an apartment with anywhere from two to three households represented, none of whom had access to a car. I asked him, "If you do come in the front entrance, how do you get to school?"

With a mouth full of Sprite and chicken sandwich, he responded, "I take the city bus. First thing I have to do is wait for the 12. It comes every thirty minutes or so. Once I am on the 12, it takes me to the transfer station where I wait for the 33 to take me out to Riverside. That could be at most a 30-minute wait, then a 30-minute ride. It takes so long because it has to circle all the way out past Wal-Mart and then circle past the high school. By the time I get to school I have already missed about an hour, maybe more, but that is

just ELT¹¹. The thing that sucks the most is missing breakfast, but I can either get a snack from the cafeteria, if they have anything left, or I can drink lots of water to curb the hunger pains.”

I let all that soak in. There is a lot to unpack from this bag of experiences that Kyrie brings with him on a daily basis to his seventh grade classroom. I start at the beginning, “How often do you have to take the city bus to get to school?”

“Maybe once every other week. So, one out of every ten days.”

“What does the school do for you on those days?” I ask while thinking about him exercising personal agency and putting school as a priority.

Kyrie takes a big slurp of his Sprite, seeming to intentionally make it more dramatic: “They give me a tardy.”

The exchange depicted in this chapter’s opening vignette took place between me and a participant in a pilot study seeking to document the middle school experiences of young adolescents identified as homeless. While reviewing the literature about homelessness, I noticed a lack of research studies that present the point of view of youth experiencing homelessness. Though brief, the narrative above about Kyrie’s experiences in school provides a powerful glimpse into his life and how he interacts with, and is impacted by, the world. The narrative demonstrates the type of relationship that was shared between myself as a researcher and Kyrie, a seventh-grade participant in the pilot study. The interaction carries with it a multitude of implications and was the result of months’ worth of formal and informal interactions where we got to know each other. We shared common interests around basketball and humor. We shared numerous meals. We

¹¹ Extended learning time.

each talked. We each listened. Kyrie is a storyteller, a showman. He loves being the center of attention and at that moment, while eating together, we both knew enough about each other to hear what we were saying (and not saying) and understand the point. Our relationship was built around dignity and care. I respected him. He respected me. It was evident in the way we slapped palms. The type of relationship that I formed with AJ, the young participant in my dissertation study, was different. It had to be. Homelessness and housing insecurity are not comprised of a common set of conditions or experiences. The cultural and historical experiences that each participant carries with them are less like unknown variables that need to be solved and more like spices that create new and interesting flavors. They influence my perception of homelessness and housing insecurity. I am different now because of my time spent with Kyrie, and I am different still from working with AJ. They have become part of the lenses that I read these stories through.

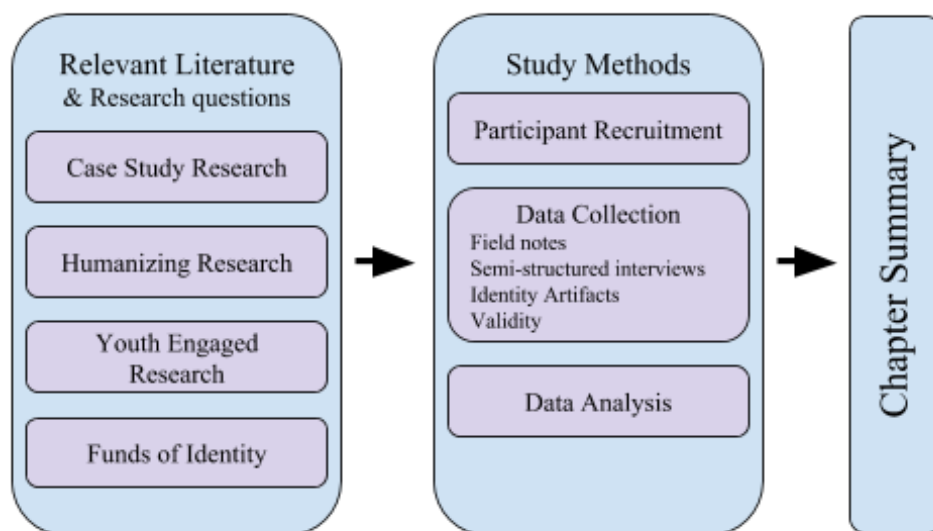


Figure 3.1. Flow chart of the organization of this chapter's content.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section presents relevant literature about case study research, humanizing research, youth engaged research, and funds of identity. The second section provides in-depth descriptions of the dissertation study's methods, including participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis. The chapter's conclusion provides a summary of the content presented.

Design of the Study

This single participant humanizing research case study is situated within a world that drastically devalues the lived experiences of individuals experiencing homelessness. I employed funds of identity and participatory-inspired methods to elicit the experiences of one young adolescent who meets the MV definition of homeless. The purpose of this dissertation study is to challenge dominant societal perceptions of homelessness and the young adolescents who experience it. The study had two research questions:

1. What funds of identity do students experiencing homelessness possess?
2. How are these funds of identity supported, if at all, by school structures and personnel?

The web of influences crafted by critical constructivism, case study research design, humanizing research, and funds of identity make it possible to present for readers one young adolescent's experiences in and out of school and how homelessness impacts all facets of life.

Case Study Research

A critical constructivist paradigm stresses the importance of working in collaboration to address power imbalances (Bentley, Fleury, & Garrison, 2007). Case study research, greatly influenced by constructivism (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Schwandt &

Gates, 2018; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2017), encourages participants to share their stories and perspectives within the confidence and safety of close relationships between researchers and participants (Crabtree & Miller, 1999; Silverman, 2017). Yin (2003, 2017) also describes case study research as desirable when researchers seek to convey the perceived relevance of contextual conditions to the phenomenon. Through sustained engagement with AJ while collecting and crafting identity artifacts, and by the graces of AJ and his family, I have positioned myself to help identify, analyze, and report on aspects of AJ's life that could benefit his middle grades experiences.

Descriptive case study. The myriad variables that lead to and impact an individual experiencing homelessness make generalizing the research difficult. In a neoliberal, standardized, and market-based society that views conditions as a matter of economics, policy stakeholders seek generalizable silver bullets that will assuage society's ills (Davies & Bransel, 2007; de Saxe, 2015; de Saxe & Smith, 2016; Laitsch, 2013). The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 (MV) has been viewed as an "unfunded mandate" of sorts (Wong et al., 2009, p. 6). MV's lack of guaranteed funding, accompanied by mandatory reporting for compliance, must be a penny pincher's dream. The MV approach seems almost to say, "We found a solution that will make it appear like progress is being made, and we do not need to put the weight of financial support behind it." Consider for example the discrepancy between the number of Georgia school districts that enroll students experiencing homelessness versus the number of districts that receive funding (GADOE, 2016). Federal policies without guaranteed funding are little more than a weak attempt at a solution that keeps conversations about homelessness at the macro level while ignoring the very real, day-to-

day lived experiences of the individuals themselves. This need for accounts of very real, day-to-day lived experiences is but one reason why this study employs a qualitative single-participant descriptive case study design (Yin, 2003).

Descriptive case studies are used to paint a picture of a phenomenon and its real life context (Yin, 2017). Research question one tasked AJ and I with discovering his funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2016) so that we could provide a “holistic and meaningful description” (Smith & Strahan, 2004, p. 360) of AJ’s experiences as a young adolescent who meets the MV definition of homelessness. and using identity artifacts will make it possible to perform cross-case analysis in the future with additional participants in different locales.

Descriptive case study research and young adolescent homelessness. The boundaries around homelessness are porous and its effects can be felt across all aspects of an individual’s lived experience (Anooshian, 2003; Biggar, 2001; Hallett, 2011; Jullianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Miller, 2012). Kozol (1988) described homelessness as being as varied as the individuals experiencing it. Stake (1995) speaks to that variation while promoting case study research,

For the most part, the cases of interest in education and social service are people and programs. Each one is similar to other persons and programs in many ways and unique in many ways. We are interested in them for both their uniqueness and commonality. We seek to understand them. We would like to hear their stories. ... [W]e enter the scene with a sincere interest in learning how they function in their ordinary pursuits and milieus and with a willingness to put aside many presumptions while we learn. (p. 1)

Working with and for students experiencing homelessness provides opportunities to “put aside many presumptions” and challenge the dominant narratives surrounding homelessness that perpetuate the single-storied response of well-meaning pity and deficit ideologies.

Humanizing Research

Empowerment and change can revolve around relationships between researchers and participants. Winn and Ubiles (2011) describe the necessity for researchers to be in relationship with participants and to act as worthy witnesses. This concept, picked up by Paris and Winn (2014), requires researchers to invest fully in the participant relationship with dignity and aims to “decolonize and humanize the research process” (p. xiii). Paris (2011) defines humanizing research as “a methodological stance that requires that our inquiries involve dialogic consciousness-raising and the building of relationships of care and dignity for both researchers and participants” (pp. 139-140). Relationships are important in all research, but there should be an increased effort to develop positive relationships that foster kindness, patience, and care with individuals and communities who experience marginalization as a result of their race, ethnicity, class, gender, and other social and cultural categories (Paris, 2011).

Paris and Winn (2014) conceptualize humanizing research as methods and interactions “[T]hat involve the building of relationships of care and dignity and dialogic consciousness raising for both researchers and participants. Furthermore, we view such a research stance and its processes as involving reciprocity and respect” (p. xvi). They describe relationships of dignity and care in the words of participants from their research. Phrases like “feeling valued,” “worthy witness,” and “inspired to action” (p. xvi) describe

relationships with participants that transcend traditional researcher-participant interactions. Performing research with and for students experiencing homelessness must be a humanizing endeavor. The single story (Adichie, 2009) surrounding homelessness is very one-dimensional and involves dehumanizing deficit perspectives (e.g., Kim, 2013). Students experiencing homelessness often experience shame and embarrassment at revealing the homelessness aspect of their living situation (Ellis & Geller, 2016). Humanizing research and the relationships it espouses focus on so much more than just a singular aspect of a person's identity (Paris, 2011).

Humanizing research places a strong emphasis on the persons involved in the research having an identity and value outside of the research itself. This is where the humanization takes place. Tirado (personal communication, October 4, 2017) described the relationships between researchers and participants as opportunities to learn about the research site. In my case, it is AJ's lived experiences or context. In Tirado's case, it is the place of working with Latinx communities of students. Tirado stated "Talking to participants, the people in the field, provides another important approach to learning about the field. This means connecting with people on the field, not just for interviews, but on a personal level." Paris (2011) states that even though all research would benefit from relationships built on dignity and care,

[I]t is particularly important when researchers are working with communities who are oppressed and marginalized by systems of inequality based on race, ethnicity, class, gender, and other social and cultural categories. This ethical need for a humanizing stance emerges as both researchers and participants seek to push

against inequities not only through the findings of research but also through the research act itself. (p. 140)

When researchers and participants collectively “push against inequities” (Paris, 2011, p. 140) the seeds of change begin to take root. Humanizing research understands that the research is just a portion of the complex network of systems that influence a person’s lived experience.

Humanizing research with students experiencing homelessness. Under a framework of humanizing research, dignity and care must be present long before the research process begins and persist after it is concluded. For example, as I prepared to submit institutional review board forms and school district research forms, I built these documents on a foundation of humanizing research. School districts refer to students experiencing homelessness as homeless students. This small difference in wording may seem insignificant. However, the deliberate choice to use “students experiencing homelessness” demonstrates that potential student participants are not homeless first but that instead they are students with varied interests and identities who are currently experiencing the condition of homelessness.

Relationships of dignity and care extend across the research process. After data collection concluded, I could not simply turn off the friendship between AJ and me. I was invested in his family’s pursuit of housing, and I will continue to work directly towards helping them find stable housing.

After my graduation, I will move. I plan to keep in touch with AJ, his family, and his school. Knowing that students experiencing homelessness encounter numerous educational inconsistencies and at times lack persistent relationships, our relationship

cannot solely be based in the temporary interactions associated with this study. As I continue to write, theorize, and share findings of this dissertation research project, I will routinely seek validation from AJ about how what I have written is representative of his experiences. It is in the sharing of ourselves that participants feel safe, respected, and able to open up. Like Paris (2011) described, AJ and I must approach this work from a humanizing perspective so that we can continue to “push against inequities not only through the findings of research but also through the research act itself” (p. 140). Performing research with and for students experiencing homelessness must be a humanizing endeavor.

Humanizing research with young adolescents. Young adolescents are consistently viewed through deficit-based lenses. In keeping with the often deficit-laden views of young adolescents, Lesko and Mitschele (2013) describe how those who teach young adolescents are viewed.

Middle school teachers are often eyed with looks of wonder, awe, surprise, shock, and, perhaps, a sideways glance. “You teach middle schoolers? On purpose?” The declarations that follow of the teacher’s endless patience, imminent sainthood, or, perhaps, a suggested trip to an asylum, all come back to the imagined problem: the hormonal, peer-driven, delinquent, young adolescents who populate the hallways and classrooms of middle grades schools. (p. 107)

Humanizing research requires that dignity, care, and respect between researchers and participants be present in relationships. Too often, young adolescents have been dehumanized to a point of classification as hormonal, peer-driven, delinquents (Andrews, 2011, 2013; Lesko & Mitschele, 2013). Their individuality has been stripped from them,

and humanizing research provides the care and dignity necessary to begin to alter the dominant deficit-driven narrative.

Youth-engaged Research

Youth have it rough and are rarely given opportunities to speak for themselves. O'Brien and Moules (2007) describe how research has contributed to that lack of voice, stating that children's "worlds [are] investigated from adult perspectives with adults choosing what is investigated" (p. 387). This sentiment seems to echo Lesko's (1996) comments that young adolescents are often "denied power over their decisions and resources" (p. 456), common dynamics and practices that could influence the development of a mindset that ascribes intellectual deficiencies to youth (Christensen & Prout, 2002). Young adolescents experiencing homelessness have seldom had their voices recognized as viable and vital with respect to their personal well being, their education, and their school experiences (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Saldanha, 2015), a problematic reality that speaks directly to the necessity of engaging youth in research on their lived experiences. Youth hold sophisticated views of their schools and communities, and they should be granted a greater say in day-to-day decisions that impact their lives (Aubrey & Dahl, 2005). True support for populations—meaning support that is needed, warranted, and sought—cannot be accomplished unless their opinions and experiences are heard.

After reviewing the literature, I have come to define youth-engaged research through an amalgamation of different texts. Youth-engaged research seeks to improve lived experiences through the acknowledgement of youth concerns coupled with actions that address those concerns (Foster-Fishman, Law, Lichty, & Aoun, 2010; Iwasaki et al.,

2014). Youth-engaged research could include the direct influence of youth in any or all portions of study development (Cahill, 2007; Clark, 2004; Pellegrino, Zenkov, Gallagher, & Long, 2016; Wissman, Staples, Visudevan, & Nichols, 2015) or it could mean that adult researchers come in to the research setting with a general plan of action and seek opportunities for youth to share their stories through some sort of engagement medium (e.g. poetry, photography, map-making, social media) (Greene, Burke, & McKenna, 2013, 2014). Concerns arise when deploying the terms “youth participation” or “youth-engaged” research because these terms “often mask tokenism and the illusion of consultation that may, in fact, advance dominant interests” (Cahill, 2007, p. 299). These concerns directly influence the need to make explicit what I am describing when I say youth-engaged research. Youth-engaged research must approach working with and for youth with a critical and humanizing stance acknowledging that youth exist within “particular sociocultural, political, and historical context[s]” (Green, 2014, p. 154). This meant that throughout the entire research process, I had to stay in constant check with my own biases, prejudices, and tendencies to exercise power and control. I did this by keeping a researcher journal where I reflected upon the research and my evolving relationship with AJ. Additionally, I spent many afternoons and evenings talking through the study and its preliminary findings with my colleague¹² and writing group partner. These reflections and conversations were vital to keeping my biases and prejudices in check.

¹² And friend, and neighbor, and just all around good guy.

Different approaches to youth-engaged research. Youth-engaged research carries with it a myriad of choices. Youth-engaged research could include but is not limited to the following:

- youth centered pedagogies (e.g., Daoud & Pellegrino, 2016);
- youth civic engagement (e.g., Pellegrino, Zenkov, & Calamito, 2013a);
- phenomenological work with youth (Hughes, 2014; Hughes-Decatur, 2012);
- critical youth empowerment (e.g., Jennings, Parra-Medina, Messias, & McLoughlin, 2006; Weinstein & West, 2012);
- critical youth engagement (e.g., Burke, Greene, & McKenna, 2016; Fox et al., 2010; Greene, Burke, & McKenna, 2013); and
- youth participatory action research (e.g., Ozer, Ritterman, & Wanis, 2010; Wissman et al., 2015; Zenkov, Taylor, & Harmon, 2016).

The paragraphs that follow will provide brief introductions to each of these categories. After the introductions, Figure 3.2 will be explained in order to describe how these categories overlap and differ.

Daoud and Pellegrino (2016) employed youth centered pedagogies as a means to better engage students and preservice teachers. They believe that youth centered pedagogies require a commitment to the idea that youth should be the most influential force when it comes to class content. The role of teachers in youth centered pedagogies is one of a guide who assists if necessary (Daoud & Pellegrino, 2016). In practice, Daoud and Pellegrino implemented student-centered photography activities for preservice teachers to “develop relationships with students to challenge them to question the world around them and search for meaning in how these enduringly relevant concepts manifest

in their lives” (p. 472). Ultimately, the work of youth centered pedagogies begins, ends, and consistently returns to the lived experiences of youth involved in the work (Daoud & Pellegrino, 2016).

Though not explicitly mentioned by name in Pellegrino et al.’s (2013a) text but ever present, youth civic engagement also bases its action on the experiences of youth. Believing that “civic education should build upon self-explorations of our community lives and lead through these discourses to an efficacious conception of citizenship” (p. 96), youth civic engagement can be utilized in classrooms or communities with the intention of defining what it means to be an American citizen. For Pellegrino and colleagues this revolved around choice and included student-created poetry and photography.

Critical youth empowerment seeks “to support and foster youth contributions to positive community development and sociopolitical change, resulting in youth who are critical citizens, [who] actively participat[e] in the day-to-day building of stronger, more equitable communities” (Jennings et al., 2006, p. 40). After reviewing four different models of critical youth empowerment and conducting numerous studies themselves, Jennings et al. (2006) report that critical youth empowerment is composed of six key dimensions: (1) a welcoming environment, (2) meaningful participation and engagement, (3) equitable power-sharing, (4) engagement in critical reflection on interpersonal and sociopolitical processes, (5) participation in sociopolitical processes to affect change, and (6) integrated individual and community-level empowerment. These six dimensions make explicit the need for conscious decisions by those involved to ensure the thoughtful development of critical youth empowerment programs and opportunities for youth.

Critical youth engagement, though similar to critical youth empowerment, has slightly different foci. Fox et al. (2010) describe critical youth engagement as the overlap between youth participatory action research, youth organization and leadership, and social justice work with youth. Critical youth engagement has five key commitments, recognizing that

1. youth carry knowledge and expertise about conditions of their everyday lives shaped in contexts of oppression, colonization, and resistance;
2. youth and adults can engage together in serious inquiry into the histories and contemporary conditions of injustice and struggle;
3. it is crucial to examine cross-sector circuits of dispossession and pools of resistance as they intersect across time, space, communities, and bodies;
4. research should be linked to organizing and action; and
5. effective research teams include youth leaders and adult allies.

(Fox et al., 2010, p. 5-6)

These commitments bear a resemblance to the key dimensions of critical youth empowerment, but critical youth engagement specifically proclaims a belief that youth are knowledgeable, capable, and experts in their own lives.

Youth participatory action research (YPAR) arguably could, encompass all of the different approaches to youth-engaged research that have been described above. A key focus of YPAR involves engaging youth participants in all aspects of the research but especially in “critical reflection and action related to issues within their own communities and institutions” (Wissman et al., 2015, p. 188). Projects approaching research from a YPAR angle oftentimes result in some sort of “research artifact” (p. 188) determined and

created by the youth participants. Ozer et al. (2010) describe the main components of YPAR as a focus “on promoting youth’s sense of ownership and control over the process, and promoting the social and political engagement of youth and their allies to help address problems identified in the research” (p. 153). Key processes of YPAR include: “iterative integration of research and action; training and practice of research skills; practice of strategic thinking and strategies for influencing change; and adults’ sharing of power with students in the research and action process” (Ozer, 2016, p. 264). Outside of research projects, YPAR also develops vital components of an engaged citizenry such as stance of inquiry and development of voice to speak out against injustices (Kornbluh, Ozer, Allen, & Kirshner, 2015). Additionally, YPAR can help promote youth critical engagement with issues of power and privilege (Jones et al., 2016).

The approaches to youth-engaged research described above do not exist within strict rigid boundaries. A study, if conceptualized appropriately, could fall within all of the categories at the same time or only one of them. Figure 3.2, below, should be viewed as a visual representation of the relationships that exist amongst these categories.

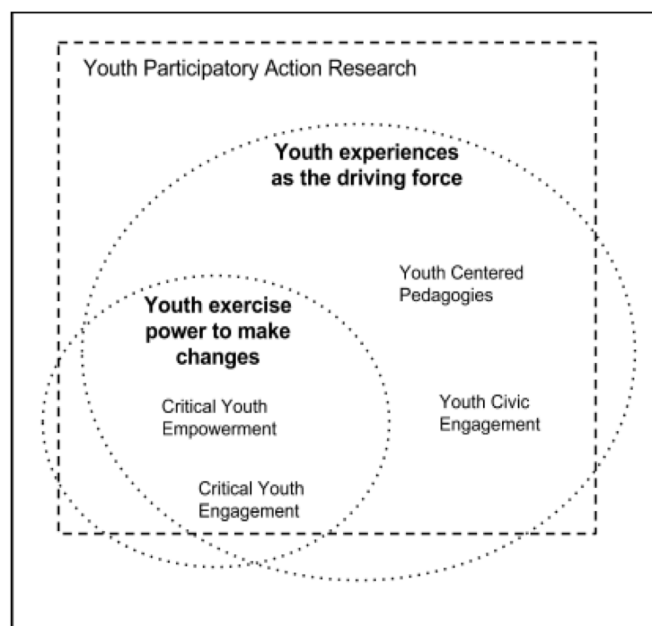


Figure 3.2. Youth-engaged research theoretical formulation. Non-solid lines represent the permeable boundaries of each category.

How the pieces fit. Youth-engaged research encompasses many different methods, means, frameworks, and ideas. To make better sense of those relationships, I created Figure 3.2 to present in visual form how I interpret the nuance of youth-engaged research. I believe that the key components of youth-engaged research should include pieces of each type of research described above, but viewing youth as experts of their own lives is of utmost importance. In Figure 3.2 the borders of each section were intentionally drawn as being incomplete. This incompleteness should be viewed as a permeability that allows for aspects of each section to bleed into the others. These borders also overlap so that it is not assumed that all critical youth empowerment research projects are simultaneously YPAR. For example, Jennings and colleagues (2006) state that one of the six key dimensions of critical youth empowerment is the “meaningful participation and engagement” (p. 32) of youth. Fine’s group (2007)

describe projects where youth are only consulted after a project is guided by adults and well underway. Fine et al. shared

Or we hear from reformers eager to convince the union, or business, or parents about the benefits of the reform and they want it presented in students' words.

Our email inboxes are a virtual catalogue of invitations to "gather student voices" as if they were Christmas tree decorations on an already pre-determined reform for their own good. (pp. 805-806)

Youth voices and participation are treated as simple tools or commodities that can be used to accomplish an adult's agenda. Tokenism is far from meaningful participation and engagement.

In reviewing youth-engaged research articles and book chapters, I found that youth experiences were the driving force for nearly every article that I reviewed. Youth-centered pedagogies' insist that "young people should drive class content" (Daoud & Pellegrino, 2016, p. 472). The goal of critical youth engagement is to promote change through an examination of "how youth have experienced inequities" (Burke et al., 2016, p. 145). Both types of studies focus on youth experiences as driving forces but Burke and colleagues (2016) focused more intently on structuring opportunities for youth to become critical change agents in their personal environments to impact change. Thus, youth centered pedagogies and critical youth engagement must be separated by the permeable barrier in Figure 3.2. The reasoning behind the two ovals expanding outside of the YPAR box rests in YPAR's requirement that youth be worked with and not on (Fine et al., 2007). It would be possible (and disingenuous) for a research project to include youths' experiences as the driving force, but not resemble a YPAR project (e.g., a research

project that does the reporting of youth experiences without the input of youth themselves). On the other hand, it would also be possible for a research project to resemble a YPAR project while failing to connect to the youths' lived experiences (e.g., youth researchers are not consulted in the design process or given any choice as to how the project progresses).

How researchers have enacted youth-engaged research. Youth-engaged research often follows the trajectories of youth participants' passions. Researchers working with and for youth in different settings have conducted projects with numerous different intentions, including, but not limited to: confronting gentrification with photography, poetry, map-making, and civic engagement; imagining a school that better meets the needs of youth through map-making; defining what a mentor could be through humanizing research; exploring bodily enough-ness (Hughes, 2016); defining quality teaching through the photographs of those being taught; and embodied inquiry in school spaces. Over the next several paragraphs I will present specific examples of how researchers have collaborated with youth using youth-engaged research methods.

Youth are engaged in their communities in ways that adults are not. That being so, they must experience changes in their communities in different ways as well. Youth-engaged research with young adolescents in gentrifying communities presents for readers just how urban renewal impacts their daily experiences. In Harlem, Valerie Kinloch worked with multiple youth over the course of many years to document and share via photographs, journals, and other youth created artifacts, how they were experiencing the gentrification of their neighborhoods (2005, 2007, 2009). Her work reveals that the covert language of urban renewal and gentrification is not hidden to youth participants.

One of Kinloch's (2007) participants, after an elaborate verbal dance around race, openly describes the whitewashing of Harlem that strips the neighborhood of its culture.

Similarly, Greene, Burke, and McKenna (2013, 2015, 2016) worked with youth in a small Midwestern city whose neighborhood was experiencing a whitewashing of its own at the hands of university expansion. Through civic programs, mapping activities, and critical youth engagement, the research team—consisting of Greene, Burke, McKenna, and their youth co-researchers—worked towards describing how the gentrification and urban renewal efforts impacted the youths' lives.

Clark (2010, 2011a, 2011b) uses many participant-created artifacts combined together in what she calls the mosaic approach to learn about children's experiences in schools. Map-making, one component of the mosaic, is used to elicit personal experiences and “provide[s] different modes of expression which may be in contrast to the dominant written discourses of report-writing and assessment” (Clark, 2011a, p. 327). The maps, despite topographical inaccuracy, are still “data in their own right” (Clark, 2011b, p. 314), which can be used to describe lived experiences. Pacheco and Vélez (2009) view maps as “visual artifacts of how people see the world as mediated by their particular value systems and relationships of power” (p. 288). Using maps with youth experiencing homelessness can provide an illuminated view of an under-documented lived experience, as such, map-making as a method will be further elaborated upon later in the chapter.

As a response to students' lack of engagement with literacy efforts in schools, the Through Students' Eyes (TSE) project sought to elicit the experiences of youth using visual media (Zenkov, van Lier, Harmon, & Tompkins, 2009). Since its inception in

2004, TSE has worked with over 400 students in multiple locations including the United States, Haiti, and Sierra Leone (Through Students' Eyes, 2013). The educators and community members who started TSE were alarmed by high dropout rates and low student engagement in schools in urban areas and sought insight from the students themselves in order to begin to make changes to school and community environments (Marquez-Zenkov, Harmon, van Lier, & Marquez-Zenkov, 2007). Through Students' Eyes utilized visual methods because of their ability to “motivate students to develop an awareness of and share—through complex writings and presentations—personal insights related to their school experiences” (Bell, Ewaida, Lynch, & Zenkov, 2011, p. 34). These projects not only bear witness to troubling aspects of students' lives but also illuminate how teachers can be better prepared to serve their needs (Zenkov, 2009). The photovoice methodology used in TSE tasked participants with taking photos, reflecting on their photos, and then sharing the photos in some manner to identify common themes among participants (Zenkov et al., 2014). The project helped build engagement between students and their classes, preservice teachers and their future classrooms, practicing teachers and the content they present, and teacher educators and the communities they serve (Zenkov & Harmon, 2009; Zenkov, Harmon, Bell, Ewaida, & Lynch, 2011; Zenkov, Harmon, & van Lier, 2008; Zenkov et al., 2016).

The photovoice methods used by TSE are widely used in youth-engaged research. Marquez-Zenkov (2003), who later published under Zenkov, began using photovoice as a method before TSE. Students used photographs as a means of interacting with public art and developing deeper understandings of language arts and literacy concepts (Marquez-Zenkov, 2003). Part of the urban renewal and gentrification studies performed by Greene,

Burke, and McKenna included photovoice methodologies due to their ability to “provide children with a rich space to represent their social worlds and order their place within particular environments” (Burke & Greene, 2015, p. 387) and as opportunities for youth “to tell different kinds of stories about the spaces of [their] lives” (p. 388). Similarly, Foster-Fishman and colleagues (2010) utilized photovoice with youth to determine “how young people can become involved in their neighborhoods, schools, and community and how the community can support their future goals” (p. 69). Photovoice was also used by Maguire and Berge (2009) as an introduction into conversations about gender issues observed during a participatory action research project conducted on an American Indian reservation. Tropp Laman, Jewett, Jennings, Wilson, and Souto-Manning (2012) describe how photovoice was used to create photo essays that challenged societal views of youth as “troubled, troublemakers, or unproductive” (p. 211).

A common youth-engaged research method involves youth creating their own texts as a way of transferring curricular power from the hands of teachers to students. There exists a plethora of literature documenting youths’ use of poetry in and out of school spaces to enact change (e.g., Daoud & Pellegrino, 2016; Pellegrino, Zenkov, & Calamito, 2013a, 2013b; Weinstein & West, 2012; Wissman, Staples, Vasudevan, & Nichols, 2015). When youth-engaged projects are coupled with preservice teacher preparation courses, youth created texts not only promote youth agency but also demonstrate for future teachers the relevance and authenticity of products crafted by youth (Daoud & Pellegrino, 2016). Vasudevan, Rodriguez Kerr, Hibbert, Fernandez, and Park (2014) reported on the multimodal texts crafted by court-involved youth in New York City who participated in the *Voices Project*. The Voices Project promoted

multimodal literacies in youth and resulted in the creation of movie posters, music videos, lyrics, collages, and numerous other products. They found that the project fostered strong senses of belonging and care among participants and facilitators.

Youth participatory action research projects have been used in numerous different ways. As an example of the interrelationships between youth-engaged research and YPAR shown in Figure 3.2, many of the studies already described above utilized some aspect of YPAR methods in their studies. Participatory methodologies included photovoice (Photovoice, n.d.), utilized in TSE; the projects performed by Burke, Greene, and McKenna; Foster-Fishman's work (e.g., Foster-Fishman et al., 2010); and some of Ozer's work (e.g. Ozer et al., 2010). Fox and colleagues (2010) feel that YPAR greatly facilitates critical youth engagement. Frasquilho and co-researchers (2016) utilized YPAR in Portugal as a means to further engage youth in health and wellness initiatives. Lushey and Munro (2015) found that the participatory action research model worked well with youth transitioning out of government care and into adulthood. According to the authors, YPAR "has the potential to empower young people to participate in research by minimizing power imbalances between researchers and participants; thus reducing bias and contributing to children and young people's voices being heard, enhancing understanding" (p. 533). But Lushey and Munro also caution that the YPAR model should not be implemented without proper training and support for the youth involved.

Part of what made this dissertation youth-engaged and humanizing was in the way I made myself available to simply spend time with AJ. I followed his lead and let him take conversations in whatever direction he wanted. If he wanted to talk about Instagram

or shoes, we talked about Instagram and shoes. If he wanted to talk about rappers that he likes, I told him about rappers I liked which led to this humorous exchange.

Matt: *That's awesome. So, you like rap. Who do you listen to? Who's your favorite?*

AJ: *Trippie Redd. Do you know him?*

Matt: *No.*

AJ: *His name's Trippie Redd.*

Matt: *Trippie Redd?*

AJ: *Yeah.*

Matt: *Like the color red?*

AJ: *Yeah.*

Matt: *I'll have to look him up.*

AJ: *And Rich the Kid.*

Matt: *Yes.*

AJ: *You know him?*

Matt: *Yes. [lies... I have no idea who he is talking about]*

AJ: *Yeah. How you know them?*

Matt: *I've heard the name. [lies again]*

AJ: *Yeah. And Famous Dex? What about Gucci Mane?*

Matt: *Oh, yeah. [ok. Gucci Mane I know]*

AJ: *And Migos. I like listening to them.*

Matt: *Yeah? [YEAH, Migos! I heard them on the radio...right?]*

AJ: *Yeah.*

Matt: *I used to listen to rap all the time. That was all I would listen to, when I was in fifth grade. What? Why are you laughing at me?* [shit, he is on to me and knows I have no idea what he is talking about] *This big old white dude with a beard, like ...*

AJ: [chuckling] *The face you're making, is ...*

Matt: *The face I'm making is funny? I can't help that. That's just the way my face is. Wu-Tang Clan, OutKast.*

AJ: *Yeah. That's **old** school rap, ain't it?*

Matt: *Well, it's not **old school rap**. Sure, **it's older rap**.* [don't let him hurt your feelings, Matt.]

AJ: *Do they still rap?*

Matt: *Wu-Tang? Yeah. Well, Method Man and* [realizing that he is more of an actor now] *... Yeah, Wu-Tang just came out with something* [At least I thought they did], *just recently. OutKast, every once ...* [clearly I am struggling to remain relevant with AJ] *... I mean ... I feel like most of them just go on to acting. They're like, let me go make money a different way...* [finding a way to change the subject and save face] *Okay. So we know school's fun. You hang out with your friends. What else is good about school?*

As uncomfortable and self deprecating as this exchange was, I look back on it with humor and remember how he was able to be the expert. AJ talked to me about rap he likes, how he wants to be a rapper, and *that* led in to how he uses his phone as a tool to accomplish those goals.

Funds of Identity

In my conceptualization of this study, I nest funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2012) within humanizing research. Funds of identity can be understood as the “lived experiences by the self that can include significant others, cultural tools, geographical places, institutions, and activities that people use to express and understand themselves” (Esteban-Guitart, 2016, p. 51). According to Esteban-Guitart (2012), these funds are historically accumulated, culturally developed, and socially distributed. “Historically accumulated” refers to the notion that identities are constructed and influenced over time (Esteban-Guitart, 2012). A person’s identity today is different from their identity tomorrow due to a further accumulation of influences. “Culturally developed” implies that identity is not genetically programmed into a person but develops in response to interactions “between the person and their sociocultural environment” (Esteban-Guitart, 2012, p. 178). “Socially distributed” suggests that a person’s identity “is transmitted and internalized through social interaction and participation in contexts of life and activity” (p. 178). Esteban-Guitart states that funds of identity are essential for a person’s self-definition, self-expression, and self-understanding.

A person’s funds of knowledge “refer[s] to the historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992, p. 133). The act of uncovering funds of knowledge requires teachers to adopt a mindset of co-learner with students who are valued as the experts in their lives (Moll & Gonzalez, 1994). Funds of identity, birthed out of the concept of funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 1992), are cemented when individuals actively use their funds of knowledge to define themselves.

For example, I view being from Maine as a fund of knowledge. In saying I am from Maine I am choosing to actively define myself as a Mainer and thus turn a fund of knowledge into a fund of identity.

There are five main funds of identity categories (Esteban-Guitart, 2012; Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014a; Joves, Siques, & Esteban-Guitart, 2015). The first fund of identity category is geographical and involves identifying with any specific area or territory. Identifying as a Mainer, someone from Maine, is considered a geographical fund of identity. The second category is practical and includes activities individuals participate in. These funds could include identifying as a writer, a researcher, and an amateur chef. Each of those practical funds of identity is accompanied by an action: writing, researching, and cooking. The third fund of identity is cultural, which could include artifacts such as religious symbols or flags. Examples of cultural funds of identity could include the Star of David, a coexist sticker, or a confederate battle flag. The fourth, social funds of identity, includes significant others, relatives, friends, essentially identities that are pulled from taking part in relationship. Identifying with a partner, child, or team is considered a social fund of identity. The fifth, and last, fund of identity is institutional, which includes social institutions like marriage or family and also includes membership in institutions. Examples of institutional membership could include a university, a church, or a professional organization. The five types are summarized in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1
Types of funds of identity

Type	Definition	Examples
Geographical	Any reference to an area such as a river, a landscape, a mountain, a town, a city, a country, or a nation.	Canadian, Georgian, Athenian, Appalachian

Practical	Significant activities for a person such as a sport, music, or work.	Basketball, guitarist, drummer, barista
Cultural	Artifacts such as flags or religious symbols.	Star of David, Sikh Khanda, cross
Social	Relevant people.	Partner, family members, friends
Institutional	Any social institution such as references to marriage or to a specific belief system.	Baptist, Sunni, university student, marriage

Note. Table 3.1 modified from (Joves et al., 2015, p. 70).

Many of the five funds of identity categories overlap depending on the fund being discussed. To demonstrate this, I will present two examples. The first example of overlapping funds of identity revolves around the troubled history of the confederate battle flag. The battle flag could simultaneously serve as cultural, institutional, and geographical funds of identity for some individuals. It could be a geographical fund of identity, connecting someone to specific region of the United States. It could be an institutional fund of identity if a school, such as the University of Mississippi, uses the flag to represent their mascot. The battle flag could also represent a cultural fund of identity, signifying an intentional choice to align oneself with the hate and bigotry associated with neo-Nazis and white nationalists.

Minecraft (Mojang, 2011), an online game, serves as another example of overlapping funds of identity. *Minecraft* is what is referred to as a sandbox game—a game where players are able to interact with the game in whatever manner they want—and has developed a massive following including selling more than 144 million copies of the game (Horti, 2018). *Minecraft* can simultaneously fall within the practical, social, and cultural funds of identity. By playing and developing skill with the game, individuals

develop a practical fund of identity that could translate into the classroom. At the same time, they are developing a social network with other players both in and out of the game resulting in a social fund of identity. *Minecraft's* 144 million units sold translate to a massive cultural fund of identity. The game's 8-bit design is easily recognizable and its logo, items, and characters adorn t-shirts, hats, and department store shelves.

Funds of identity with young adolescents experiencing homelessness. Esteban-Guitart (2012) states "Identity is not culture-free, and culture, which is shaped by social institutions, artifacts and cultural concepts, is always governed by powerful elites and lobbies that control these social institutions, artifacts, and cultural concepts" (p. 176). Thus, identity is, at times, inscribed upon individuals without their consent. According to the dominant narratives surrounding homelessness, powerful elites, lobbies, and social institutions believe homelessness is a result of personal choices that result in the loss of housing for immoral and unintelligent individuals. There is little attention paid to systemic forces that impact homelessness and the education of students experiencing homelessness. Within schools, the powerful elites are administrators and teachers. However, educators often lack an understanding of student homelessness that recognizes the fallacy of the dominant, negative narratives (Hallett, Skrla, & Low, 2014). In fact, some educators are unaware that students experiencing homelessness are present in their classrooms (Calabrese Barton, 2000; Kim, 2013; Powers-Costello & Swick, 2008, 2011). Students experiencing homelessness could benefit from their teachers seeking a better understanding of the funds of identity that everybody carries with them on a daily basis. For example, teachers' deeper understanding of funds of identity could influence

curriculum, school structure, individual interactions, and relationships between and among teachers, students, administrators, families, and communities.

Funds of identity within humanizing research. Humanizing research places a strong emphasis on relationships between researcher and participants. Paris (2011) argues that humanizing research actually improves validity. In contrast, other forms of research may view relationships as a hindrance or even a threat to validity and objectivity (e.g., Guba & Lincoln, 2005). In humanizing research, the acts of sharing, documenting, and describing funds of identity would both require and result in stronger relationships between researchers and participants. In keeping with humanizing research, the more that positive, dialogic consciousness raising relationships are developed between researcher and participants, the more likely participants will be to open up about personal funds of identity. The more funds of identity shared, by both participant and researcher, the stronger the relationship.

This study engaging youth experiencing homelessness required the influence of both theoretical frames: humanizing research and funds of identity. By infusing the research and relationships with dignity and care, humanizing research counters realities where individuals experiencing homelessness too often have been dehumanized, pushed to the margins, ignored, and written off. In related fashion, a person's funds of identity show that there is so much more to an individual than just what dominant narratives say about them.

Funds of identity and young adolescents. *This We Believe* (NMSA, 2010), a foundational document for the organization and the education of young adolescents,

describes the needs of middle school students and the schools that serve them. The authors begin their charge by stating

Every day, millions of diverse, rapidly changing 10- to 15-year-olds make critical and complex life choices and form the attitudes, values, and dispositions that will direct their behavior as adults. They deserve an education that will enhance their healthy growth as lifelong learners, ethical and democratic citizens, and increasingly competent, self-sufficient individuals who are optimistic about the future and prepared to succeed in our ever-changing world. (NMSA, 2010, p. 3)

This We Believe (NMSA, 2010) views young adolescents as influential in more than just the classroom and curriculum. An education that encourages lifelong learning, democratic citizenship, and self-sufficiency includes the entire school and its community. Funds of identity are built upon the belief that a person's multifaceted identities can bear relational and educational fruit in classrooms and school settings (Esteban-Guitart, 2016). It seems as though funds of identity were designed specifically for work with young adolescents in middle grades schools.

Participant Recruitment

Recruitment was very slow and difficult. An abundance of what Tierney and Hallett (2010) refer to as "border guards" limited access to potential participants in a study focused on young adolescents experiencing homelessness. School district level personnel, university level bureaucracy, and school level faculty and staff oscillated between positions of full fledged support and apprehensive acceptance of my dissertation study. As one example from a lengthy list of border guards, the person designated as director of homeless education, not to be confused with the district's homeless liaison,

inserted herself into the recruitment process *after* I had gotten approval for my research from both the district itself and the university's Institutional Review Board. Her concern—that students identified as homeless would somehow be “outed”—perhaps reflects both her care for students and a desire to shield her position from revelations of negative student experiences. Or, that a study focused on youth identified as homeless would actually surface an issue that the district would not want to receive attention for. Although I completely understand why this would happen, the reality was that I worked on identifying participants for five and a half months through six different entities (one middle grades school and five different social services agencies). Even with multiple and varied attempts at recruitment, only one participant chose to take part in this study. The more that I contemplated homelessness, spent time with AJ, and camped out with the data, the more I began to recognize the importance and influence that a single-participant case could hold.

The use of single participants is not uncommon. Single-case experimental design (SCED) has been used by researchers to determine the effectiveness of interventions (Lane, Ledford, & Gast, 2017). A largely quantitative approach, in SCED “each client serves as his or her own control, meaning that his or her performance under one condition is compared with performance under a different condition” (Lane et al., 2017, p. 2). This attention to an individual's experience and how they operate under the influence of a specific intervention make SCEDs appealing for use in many fields of study. In occupational therapy, for example, “SCEDs are well suited for formatively evaluating the therapeutic benefits of an intervention within and across clients” (Lane et al., 2017, p. 2). Research in special education and the behavioral sciences points to the advantages, and in

some cases necessity of, working with individual clients (Gast & Ledford, 2014).

Referring to young adolescents experiencing homelessness as clients is not unreasonable.

Literature in counseling, social work, and the health field refer to individuals who make use of services as clients (Anooshian, 2003; Biggar, 2001; Gast & Ledford, 2014; Jullianelle & Foscarinis, 2003). With respect to providing services to and for students experiencing homelessness, Sulkowski and Joyce-Beaulieu (2014) argue that “members of student support teams must eschew assuming a gatekeeper role for service delivery and instead focus more intently on the unique circumstances displayed by each homeless student they encounter” (p. 718). No one person’s experiences or conditions will be 100% translatable to another’s. Regardless, their needs must be met and aspects of the methods and practices used could be replicable. Given the difficulties in participant recruitment, the utility of single participant studies, and the dearth of literature documenting the experiences of young adolescents identified as homeless, a single participant case study has tremendous potential to inform and address my two research questions. One person has multiple funds of identity (research question one) and those funds of identity will influence school regardless of whether or not faculty and staff acknowledge them (research question two).

Additionally, the use of a single participant case study allowed for a deeper engagement with AJ, his family, and his funds of identity. Dora and I coordinated schedules and decided that meeting on a regular basis would be best, same day each week. I offered to bring food for the entire family since they were willing to share time with me. If this case had multiple participants

- I would not have been able to afford to feed multiple families on a weekly basis,

- Close relationships with another set of family member might not have been possible, and
- Given other personal responsibilities (being a student, an instructor, a father, a husband, etc.), someone would have not been given the necessary time and emotional investment.

So, the single participant nature of this case study allowed for a more humanizing relationship between AJ and I. Sharing food together served as a very tangible example of care and respect. The time that I had available to meet and talk with AJ's grandmother and aunts was definitely a perk. Being able to talk to them further humanized this experience. None of my conversations with them were audio recorded but they have been influential in the way that I crafted these narratives and vignettes about AJ. In a way, they helped theorize AJ's experiences for me and became in their own right a source of data that is included in this single participant case study.

Yin (2017) describes six sources of evidence commonly used in case study research, including: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observation, and physical artifacts. This study, AJ's case, drew on information from each of these six forms of evidence in some form or fashion.

Data Collection

AJ and I interacted regularly over the course of many weeks during data collection. Part of the humanizing aspect of this study was our frequent meetings outside of traditional data collection. We kept in touch via text. We had numerous conversations both before and after the audio recorder was turned on. We shared meals together. Not because I felt like AJ and his family were going to go hungry, that would have been

based on pity. But, because I like pizza. I know AJ likes pizza. I know his four younger brothers and sisters like pizza. I know that his grandmother would like to not cook a meal once a week. When people are friends, and they value each other, they do things that out of a desire to care for each other. I genuinely enjoy hanging out with AJ. We have lots of fun talking and laughing. His little brothers make me laugh. His little sisters are the politest children I have ever met. I feel like I have been living humanizing relationships before I learned the vocabulary to call it humanizing. I enjoy people and meeting them where they are to genuinely spend time together. I did not pick up humanizing research and actively apply its strategies, it is the way I attempt to walk through the world.

AJ and I texted, we talked on the phone, we met for meals, we met just to chat. For example, we would meet at his grandmother's apartment because it was a place that he felt comfortable and able to talk. Even though his grandmother's apartment was smaller than the shelter, the only people he shared it with were family members. If we had met at the shelter, AJ would have had to explain what was going on and bring more attention to himself than desired. We would meet to eat pizza, talk, and create identity artifacts. AJ and I continue to see each other about every two weeks. During our interactions we chat about our lives, school, and the family's pursuit of stable housing. I also used these interactions as an opportunity to perform a member check with AJ about preliminary findings and what I had written since our previous conversation. Humanizing research, the theoretical and methodological framework that guides the research design for this study, aligns with my personal belief that all individuals are deserving of dignity and respect. I respect AJ and his family. I believe that they respect me. We consider each other to be friends. For the purposes of this dissertation study I must define aspects of the

friendship as data collection opportunities. There were three main data sources that were analyzed in this study: field notes, semi-structured interviews, and identity artifacts.

Field Notes

My field notes were in no way an attempt at recording a moment by moment log of the conversations taking place. They were an attempt at capturing the details of my interactions with AJ (Stake, 1995). This study is about homelessness and how AJ's experiences and identity are influenced by the lack of a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" (MV, 2015, § 725). Part of that experience must include, for example, the nature of the locations we met. The sounds. The temperature. The smells and tastes. While engaging in interviews/conversations and crafting identity artifacts with AJ, I recorded key details that I felt would be missed in only listening to an audio recording or reading a transcription of the interaction. My field notes also included rough notes of the interactions with AJ in the moment. I jotted down comments and questions related to my interactions with AJ. These field notes also served to capture instances when my personal beliefs and biases began to come in play and potentially influence how I was interpreting AJ's identity artifacts. I used the field notes as a way to "check" myself and my biases.

Semi-structured Interviews

I approached AJ's interviews with Stake's (1995) recommendations of providing guiding questions and tasks so that conversations result in a "description of an episode, a linkage, an explanation" (p. 65). My semi-structured interviews followed Esteban-Guitart and Moll's (2014b) identity artifact creation prompts. I had piloted the process of creating identity artifacts with teacher candidates in a class that I taught. I also used map-making

protocols in the pilot study iteration of my research, during which I had also practiced s's (2010) approach to interviewing in the social sciences. The semi-structured interview protocol, which can be found in Appendix E, served as a foundation of sorts for conversations. I improvised the wording and order of questioning, using the interview guide flexibly (Patton, 2002). Even with only three questions, the semi-structured protocol of the initial interview resulted in a nearly hour long conversation. After the introductory interview, the identity artifacts AJ created served as elicitation devices. My line of questioning associated with each identity artifact can also be found in Appendix E.

Identity Artifacts

Yin (2017) states that case study research should include physical artifacts relevant to the case in question. These artifacts provide “insight into cultural features” (Yin, 2017, p. 114) and could include films, pictures, works of art, even technological tools like phones. Considering that we are constantly creating, utilizing, and consuming physical artifacts, we are also constantly developing our funds of identity as we walk through the world. These identities can be intentionally shared and depicted for others to see and experience. Esteban-Guitart (2016) states

[I]dentities or acts of identification can be materialized, encoded, or inscribed into tangible artifacts such as a diagram, a picture, a song, or any written, spoken, visual, or multimedia product. These are identity tools created by learners who invest in them and project onto them their meanings, interests, and so on. (p. 44)

These artifacts can serve not only as vital sources of data that can be employed to work for the elimination of inequities but also as foundations for relationships of dignity and care between young adolescents and caring adults. Utilizing identity artifacts

collaboratively with students experiencing homelessness allows the research team—adult and youth co-researchers—to “transport knowledge, experiences, situations, and practices in and out of school” (p. 44). The identity artifacts utilized were participant-created maps, self-portraits, significant circles, and social media posts. Each identity artifact will be described further below.

Funds of identity work has been used mostly for the creation of curriculum units in classrooms (Esteban-Guitart, 2012; Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014a, 2014b; Joves et al., 2015; Subero et al., 2017). This dissertation study expands upon the use of funds of identity as a means of cultivating school environments by shaping policies and procedures for the benefit of a specific population of students. Additionally, this work promotes a counter-narrative to challenge the dominant societal views of homelessness.

Maps. Maps provide a direct line into the way that individuals see the world. Pacheco and Vélez (2009) share that “Maps are visual artifacts of how people see the world as mediated by their particular value systems and relationships of power” (p. 288). Maps can be extremely wide or they could be very local. Graue and Walsh (1998) write that working with and for children must be an intensely local process. This intense locality requires navigating and dismantling the borders constructed between youth and adults. Utilizing maps and map-making serves as an attempt to gain intensely local insights about in and out of school experiences of youth who meet the United States federal government definition of homeless. When participants create artifacts, specifically maps, “different modes of expression” (Clark, 2011a, p. 327) present themselves that can often challenge societal narratives and other conventional, research-driven modes of inquiry.

Clark (2011b) states that specifically naming the act *map-making* “emphasizes the active process of meaning-making which can occur as children assemble the maps rather than placing importance solely on the product, the map” (p. 315). Throughout the process of creating the maps and walking through the spaces documented by the maps, researchers are able to perform “informal interviews about the physical environment” (Clark, 2011a, p. 324) and elucidate participants’ experiences of being in the spaces being mapped.

Utilizing map-making could benefit students experiencing homelessness in their interactions in and out of school. Map-making and the accompanying conversations born out of the process will help clarify how the school’s structures and personnel interact with the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

Self portraits and significant circles. Two identity artifacts used by Esteban-Guitart in his work with students are self-portraits and significant circles (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014a; Joves et al., 2015). Both artifacts are the artistic creation of participants and result from similar prompts.

Self-portrait: “I would like you to show me on this piece of paper who you are at this moment in your life. If you wish, add the people and things most important to you at this moment in your life” (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014a, p. 38).

Significant circle: “Write down the people and activities or things that are most meaningful to you in a big circle. Write inside some smaller circles the most significant people and write inside a small square activities, hobbies, or things. Keep in mind that the closer to the center of the big circle you put the small circles and the squares this means that they are the most important to you.” (Joves et al., 2015, p. 73)

Similar to map-making, these identity artifacts become truly informative tools to uncover funds of identity when they are accompanied by interviews. This relational aspect of creation provides opportunities to strengthen humanizing connections between researcher and participant by opening up dialogic, mutual sharing.

According to Bagnoli (2004), the self-portrait promotes narrative identities of participants with the assistance of their drawings. Drawings, in this case self-portraits and significant circles, are autobiographical creations that relay lived experience (Bagnoli, 2004). Bagnoli states,

Emerging out of an ongoing activity of self-reflection and out of a process of dialogue, these narratives are the result of a negotiation process between the stories that we tell about ourselves and that others tell about us. Since multiple stories can be told about life-events, narrative choice also corresponds to some positioning of the self in society. (2004, para. 27).

Since the narrative choice is placed in the hands of participants, they possess the power to shape the story as presented to researchers. Joves and colleagues (2015) state that the use of self-portraits is valuable with youth because “it complements and facilitates discourse on the basis of the drawing and pictures evoked by the participant” (p. 72). Similarly, the significant circle involves follow-up discussions that can reveal different funds of identity as written words rather than artistic representations (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014a).

Identity artifacts and their accompanying conversations can describe not only a participant’s funds of identity but can also serve as an assessment of how school faculty, staff, structures, and policies interact with students experiencing homelessness.

Other Case Study Evidence

In addition to data collected directly from AJ, this case study pulled from available documentation sources. For example, The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 (MV, 2015), the Georgia Department of Education McKinney-Vento Report (2016), and The National Center for Homeless Education (2016) federal data report all served as very valuable sources of evidence in constructing the rationale for this study. Archival records like the original McKinney Act in 1987 demonstrated how far we have come and how little has been accomplished to address student homelessness. Interviews with AJ provided “explanations and personal views” (Yin, 2017, p. 114) of his in and out of school experiences and allowed for a more nuanced depiction of his day-to-day life. Direct observations of AJ’s interactions with his siblings, mother, aunts, and grandmother demonstrated an unspoken respect and love each of them in a different way. Participant observations of AJ’s skill use of his phone allowed me “insight into interpersonal behavior and motives” (Yin, 2017, p. 114) which helped craft a richer description of his case, funds of identity, and supports provided by the school.

Validity

The wide array of data sources provided a mosaic (Clark, 2011b) of sorts from which assertions about the study’s research questions could be discerned. Field notes, identity artifacts, and semi-structured interview transcripts influence my restructuring of AJ’s lived experiences within the pages of this dissertation. The multiple data sources also serve as an attempt at establishing validity and trustworthiness of the study. Even with multiple data sources, this is only a partial account of AJ’s lived experience, and I

must reiterate that this reporting and analysis is greatly influenced by my personal cultural and historical locations (Jones & Woglom, 2016). In the later stages of data collection, I presented my preliminary findings to AJ. This also served as a means of determining whether or not I was presenting a valid depiction of his experiences.

Data Analysis

Data collection resulted in an abundance of individual pieces of data to consider including more than 100 pages of transcribed conversations, multiple identity artifacts, and field notes. I wanted to approach data analysis from a rather general process that still allows for the “unusual and serendipitous” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 185). My desire to follow a pattern of sorts drew me to Creswell and Poth’s (2018) *data analysis spiral*, which allowed “moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach” (p. 185). I was able to circle back to each part of data analysis with each additional step towards providing a thorough account of the study’s findings. Creswell and Poth’s *data analysis spiral* proceeds as: (1) data collection, (2) managing and organizing the data, (3) reading and memoing emergent ideas, (4) describing and classifying codes into themes, (5) developing and assessing interpretations, (6) representing and visualizing the data, and (7) an account of the findings (p. 186).

After the initial step of collecting the data, Creswell and Poth’s (2018) data analysis spiral involves organizing and managing the data. I wanted to make sure that I had access to my data regardless of the computer I was using while writing and analyzing so I created a password protected cloud folder to manage my data and writing. Dr. Gayle Andrews and I were the only two people that had access to the data throughout the

entirety of the dissertation project. I created a folder and named it AJ. The AJ folder had four different sub-folders in it: audio, identity artifacts, transcriptions, and field notes.

Once all of the data were organized, I began reflecting on the data holistically. I started by rereading my field notes while listening to the audio recordings of the research sessions. While listening I took notes on how I was interpreting AJ's experiences and his potential emerging ideas or funds of identity, and I coded different portions of the data. Each of these emerging ideas was recorded in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2
Emerging Ideas in Data Analysis

Friends	Family	Shelter	Apartment
Phone	Music	Instagram	Rap
Shoes	Teachers	Schools	Bus
Dad	Cars	Drawing	Art
Sports	Clothes	Discipline	PE
Hair	Food		

The emerging ideas were then elaborated upon, described, and classified into themes. For example, while listening to the research session where AJ crafted his significant circle, I took note of where he positioned his phone in the circle and how many times he referenced it throughout the activity. AJ's phone was discussed in every single research session. My analysis included an elaboration of how he uses his phone and how integral it was to different portions of the data. This elaboration is pictured below in Figure 3.3. AJ's phone is documented in the upper left hand corner. All of the blue rectangles are ways that he uses his phone on a daily basis. He uses his phone to take

pictures, record video, record audio, chat with friends, log in to social media, write, listen to music, watch videos, look at shoes, and make phone calls.

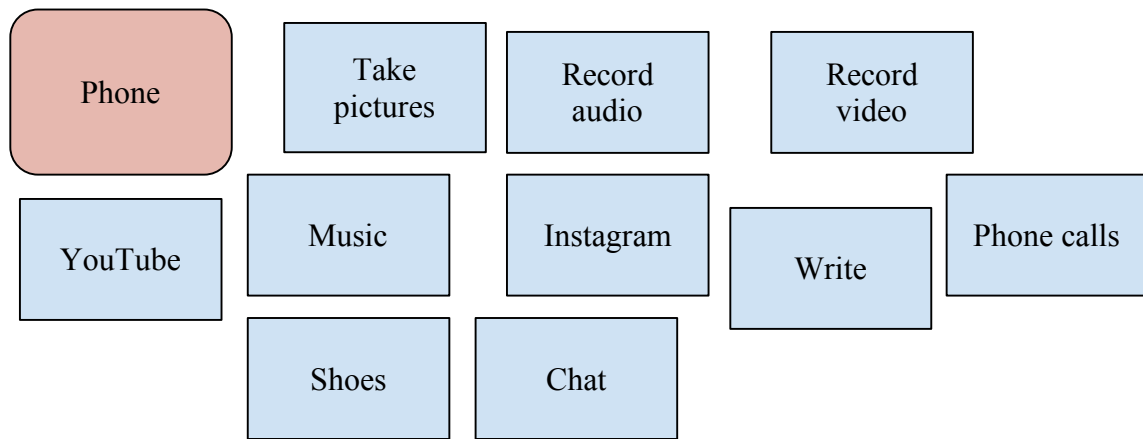


Figure 3.3. Emerging ideas from data analysis. Emerging idea about AJ's phone (red rounded rectangle) and all of the actions he is able to accomplish that he specifically mentioned in research sessions.

These emerging ideas were then described and classified into themes which, in turn, were developed into interpretations of AJ's experiences. I classified the emerging ideas in to themes by either drawing categories and sorting or by digitally moving the blue rectangles into themes. A recreation of this can be found in Figure 3.4.

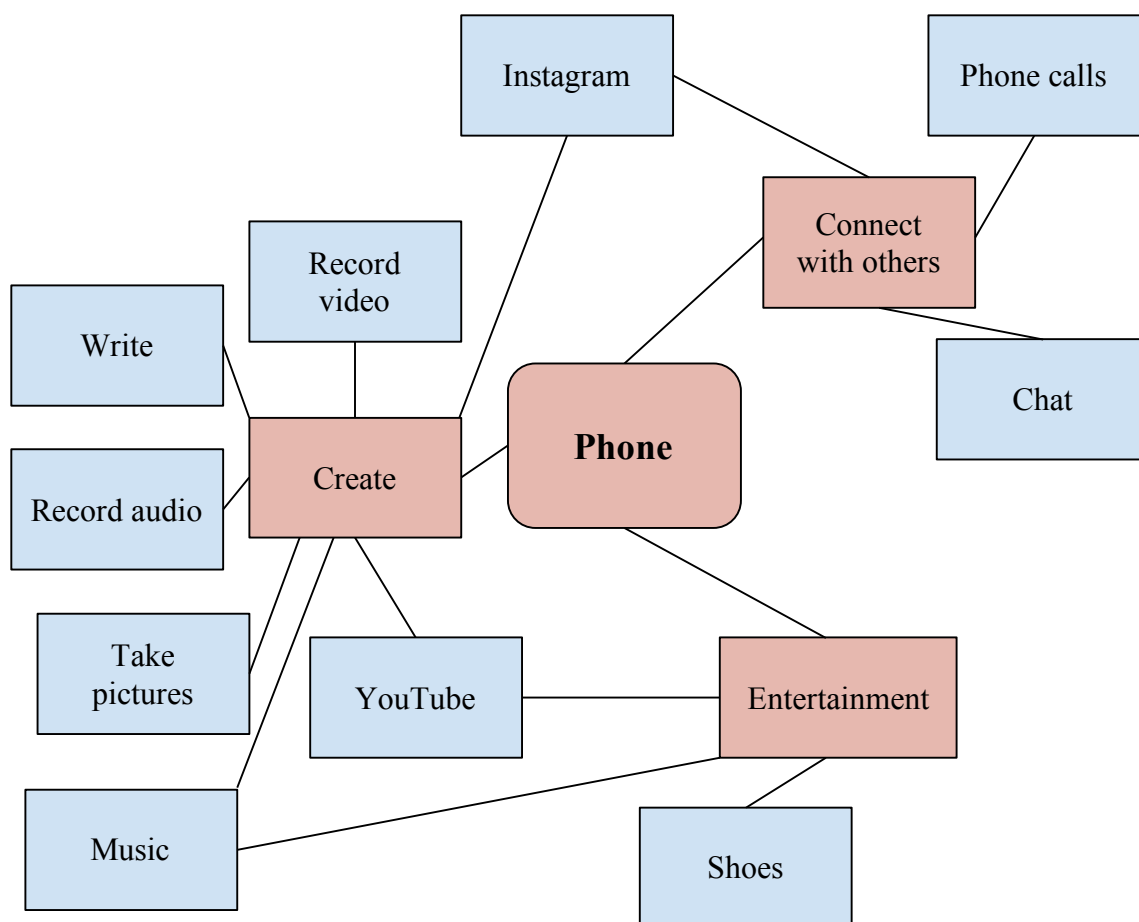


Figure 3.4. Phone emerging theme sorted.

At this point I approached AJ with my beginning understandings and interpretations of his funds of identity. This act, though common place in research, is considered to be a humanizing act. I worked with AJ and he crafted identity artifacts. I made assumptions about those artifacts. Reaching out for clarification and sharing what I have written is an intentional act of wanting to center AJ as the expert in his personal experience. I am just a conduit of his experiences to an academic audience. If I made assumptions and pushed my agenda without consulting the expert, I would do nothing to truly incorporate youth voices. This is one of the ways that this study is youth engaged. AJ is contributing to academic conversations about the experiences of youth identified as homeless. The beginning understandings I shared with AJ are recorded in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3
Beginning Understandings of AJ's Funds of Identity

Fund of Identity	Where in the data this fund was documented
Family	Field notes, introductory interview, map of shelter, discussion of school map, significant circle, discussion of significant circle, member check
Friends	Field notes, introductory interview, map of school, discussion of school map, significant circle, discussion of significant circle, member check
Creator	Field notes, introductory interview, discussion of school map, significant circle, discussion of significant circle, member check
Homeless	Field notes, introductory interview, discussion of school map, discussion of significant circle, member check

I member checked (Schwandt, 2007) my beginning understandings of AJ's funds of identity and how he is supported (or not) by school structures and personnel. These member checks acted as intentional moves towards trustworthiness, credibility, and confirmability of the findings. The four funds of identity that I approached AJ about were friends, family, creator, and homeless. With his approval, I then proceeded to craft an account of the findings, which will be further detailed in chapter four.

Chapter Summary

Everyone seems to have an opinion about homelessness. Throughout the process of conducting and writing up this dissertation research, I have talked with researchers, educators, government employees, social service providers, community members, and individuals who currently and formerly met the definition of experiencing homelessness. Few spoke of homelessness as if those experiencing it have identities that transcend the label. I am not arguing that homelessness is glamorous. It is a societal issue that must be addressed. I am saying that focusing on the homelessness aspect of their identities

distracts away from the promise and possibility present in the lives of young adolescents experiencing homelessness. Focusing on the homelessness aspect of individuals' identities is almost like saying that we want something to be wrong with *these kids*. While we—as researchers, teachers, members of a larger society that is always, already influenced by dominant narratives—expect young adolescents experiencing homelessness to be broken and in need of fixing, these very same young adolescents completely disengage from that line of thinking. The story of this dissertation presents for readers how one young adolescent overcomes the institutional label and is able to succeed in spite of it.

Chapter Three was split into two different sections: (1) relevant literature/rationale of the study's methods and (2) the methods themselves. To begin, chapter three presented relevant literature and a rationale for methods utilized in this this qualitative humanizing research descriptive case study. I first presented my rationale for using a qualitative case study to present AJ's funds of identity. Case study research promotes collaboration between participants and researchers in an attempt to share stories and perspectives that are enhanced by a critical constructivist paradigm that seeks to address power imbalances (Bentley, Fleury, & Garrison, 2007; Crabtree & Miller, 1999). Descriptive case studies describe phenomena and the real life contexts in which they occurred (Yin, 2003). The ideal result is a “holistic and meaningful description” (Smith & Strahan, 2004, p. 360) of the case. The humanizing aspects of the study made it possible for the meaningful description prescribed by Smith and Strahan (2004).

Secondly, I described humanizing research and why it was an appropriate fit for this work. Humanizing research (Paris, 2011) calls for a full investment in the

relationships between researchers and participants. These mutual relationships should be built upon a foundation of dignity and care. Humanizing ideologies extend past the bounds of research, and their focus on respect is very appropriate for work with young adolescents experiencing homelessness. I viewed the participant-researcher relationship as one that would need to extend past the collection of data. I knew that however my participants wanted help, I would be willing to make an effort to meet those needs.

In addition to the relationship extending past traditional boundaries of researcher and participant, this study was intended to move beyond the types of research often performed *on* youth. The third part of the chapter presented readers with a synopsis of literature on youth-engaged research, its roots in critical pedagogies, and the potential for change that surpasses entries in academic journals.

The next part of the chapter presented funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2012) as the guiding method for the study. Within the context of this study, I nest funds of identity within humanizing and youth-engaged research. These participatory methods, born from funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992), put the power and expertise in the hands of young adolescent participants, which falls directly in line with the critical constructivist epistemology that guides the study.

The second major section of chapter three described participant recruitment, data collection, and my data analysis process. Participant recruitment was slow and resulted in a single participant. Outside of a lack of time, I explained my rationale for not seeking further participants by situating the study within the literature on homelessness and single case experimental design. My rationale revolves largely around how no one person's experiences or conditions will be 100% translatable to another's but aspects of the

methods and practices will. This reasoning is similar to reasoning that guides research performed in counseling, social work, occupational therapy, and special education where interventions are tested for single participants (Gast & Ledford, 2015; Lane et al., 2017).

Data collection consisted of field notes, semi-structured interview audio recordings and transcriptions, and the creation and discussion of identity artifacts. Identity artifacts included participant created maps and what Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014b) refer to as a significant circle. After each identity artifact was created, AJ and I discussed why he included different elements in his artifacts.

This chapter concluded with a description of data analysis. Pinpointing when and how analysis began is impossible. Before, during, and after our research sessions, I was making sense of this experience through inner dialogue, reflecting while walking, and recording notes and glimmers in my researcher notebook. Traditional analysis was influenced largely by Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral. This portion of analysis began with organizing the data into different password protected Google Drive folders. Then I read through the transcripts and field notes while listening to the audio recordings and took notes of emerging ideas. Emerging ideas were then described and classified into themes and later developed into interpretations of AJ's experiences. At this point I approached AJ with my interpretations and with his approval I proceeded to craft an account of the findings.

Chapter three, if taken by itself, can not tell the whole story. None of the chapters within this dissertation are able to stand completely alone. As described in chapter one, this is AJ's story. Though referenced and hinted at, he and his experiences are largely

absent from the preceding pages. In chapter four, AJ's story comes center stage and he takes his rightful place as expert.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

It Sneaks Up On You

I guess becoming homeless doesn't happen all at once. My mom told me once that money problems sort of sneak up on you. She said it's like catching a cold. At first you just have a tickle in your throat, and then you have a headache, and then maybe you're coughing a little. The next thing you know, you have a pile of Kleenex around your bed and you're hacking your lungs up.

(Applegate, 2015, p. 89)

To follow Applegate's (2015) poignant description of homelessness, I would add that finding a way out of homelessness must be similar to walking up a down escalator. AJ's family slowly made their way up that down escalator. Staying at the shelter grew more and more taxing on the family. With significant assistance from NFSD personnel (detailed later in this chapter), Dora was days away from signing a lease for an apartment when she was diagnosed with mycoplasma pneumonia. M. pneumonia, according to the Centers for Disease Control (2017), occurs "when small droplets of water that contain the bacteria get into the air by coughing and sneezing while in close contact with others, who then breathe in the bacteria" (para. 3). Also referred to as walking pneumonia, outbreaks are most common "in crowded environments, like schools, college dormitories, military barracks, and nursing homes" (para. 3). To add insult to injury, the Center for Disease Control, states that m. pneumonia is most often passed around households. Three days before Dora was supposed to sign a lease on an apartment she was hospitalized with a

particularly bad case of a respiratory infection—most often passed around households—so bad that it was putting the possibility of moving into a household at risk.

I noticed that the Centers for Disease Control’s description of places where walking pneumonia is most commonly passed around did not include homeless shelters. Homeless shelters are crowded places. According to estimates from Annual Homeless Assessment Report (Solari, Shivji, de Sousa, Watt, & Silverbush, 2017), approximately 1.4 million individuals visited shelters in the United States. In 2016 there were only a total of 830,120 beds available for individuals experiencing homelessness (Social Solutions, 2016).

Let that sink in.

There are not nearly enough beds for the folks who are currently experiencing homelessness. As Desmond (2016) reminded readers

Families have watched their incomes stagnate, or even fall, while their housing costs have soared. Today, the majority of poor renting families in America spend over half of their income on housing, and at least one in four dedicates over 70 percent to paying the rent and keeping the lights on. (p. 4)

The rent is hungry and it eats first. Pulling oneself up by the bootstraps can only get someone so far. This is not just an affordable housing issue. It is a humanity issue.

This dissertation study should be interpreted as a step towards confronting homelessness as a humanity issue. Two research questions guided the inquiry:

1. What funds of identity do students experiencing homelessness possess?
2. How are these funds of identity supported, if at all, by school structures and personnel?

The purpose of this chapter is three-fold. First, as an intentional act of re-humanizing, I want to feature AJ. His experiences, voice, and expertise are the entire point of this work. Being able to share the stories and identity artifacts that he created is a privilege that I do not take lightly. Secondly, I will present the identity artifacts AJ created for this study and describe four funds of identity that revealed themselves during the identity artifact work and resulting conversations. Third, I will present an analysis of how AJ's funds of identity are supported, if at all, by school structures and personnel. Taken together, the three tasks of this chapter help construct a counter-narrative of homelessness.

AJ

The recruitment parameters—partly influenced by my institution's Institutional Research Board, North Fork School District, and my review of literature—required a thick veil of anonymity. First, potential participants were young adolescents, which puts them in a special category according to my institution's Institutional Review Board. Second, North Fork School District, rightfully so, needed to keep student information confidential due to the National School Lunch Act (Richard B Russell National School Lunch Act, 2014). The only way I could recruit participants was if the adult guardian of each potential participant reached out to me and self-selected into the study. AJ and I did not meet until the first session. All I knew about him was his mother's name and the address of the apartment where we would meet. I parked my car, collected my Little Caesar's pizzas, and rapped on the door three times in quick succession. After 30 seconds, the deadbolt clicked, the door slowly swung open, and a small four-year-old face appeared at

eye level with the door knob. The smile and kindness present in the young boy's face was infectious. I could not help but smile back. He said "Hi. Are those your pizzas?"

I chuckled and replied, "They are but I would love to share them with you. Is your mom around?" I quickly found out that she was, although not because this fine young gentleman introduced me. He was too busy announcing to his siblings that a big man with a beard had pizza for them. Dora, AJ's mother, came to the door and greeted me with a smile and a handshake. I saw where the young man's smile came from. Dora showed me in to her mother's apartment, walked me through the kitchen and into the living room where I met AJ who was reclined on a sectional couch, wearing basketball shorts, a t-shirt, Nike KD VIs, and looking at his phone. He jumped up immediately and I was surprised to see how tall he was. Like his mother and younger brother, AJ also had that infectious smile. A smile that makes your eyes slightly close when it gets wide. If he was nervous, I could not tell. Our first conversation was easy going. We made small talk while AJ, his four younger siblings, Dora, her three sisters, and her mother all ate pizza. I shared my study with AJ and Dora, and walked them through the consent and assent process. We made plans to meet on Mondays to have pizza, talk, and make identity artifacts. I then shook hands with every member of the family, from grandmother and aunts to four- and three-year-old siblings. I left the apartment the same way I came in, with AJ's younger brother walking me to and through the door. He said, "Thank you for sharing your pizza. You can come back if you want." I smiled, shook his hand again and hopped in my car.

I made it about a quarter of a mile down the road and pulled over in a grocery store parking lot. I opened my notebook and feverishly jotted down notes while the radio

played in the background. Three songs later, I put the car in drive and then immediately put it back in park. I grabbed my pen and notebook and scribbled one last note: bring more pizza.

AJ carries himself with an air of maturity I have rarely encountered. Benson and Johnson (2010) describe how youth experiencing homelessness almost need to mature faster than their stably housed peers. In this apartment filled with the noise of young children, AJ was quiet and controlled. He is a traveler. At the time we met, AJ and I had both attended the same number of schools. I have attended seven, including my undergraduate and graduate school adventures. I am 33 years old and finishing a doctor of philosophy degree in education. AJ is 11 years old and only half way through the 5th grade. During our initial meeting, AJ rattled off the list of elementary schools he has attended and even forgot to mention some because of his limited time enrolled.

Matt: *So, your mom mentioned last time all these different schools that you attended. And then you even added in another one, you're like, oh yeah don't forget about this one, and this one, and this one.*

AJ: *Yeah.*

Matt: *Can you list those for me real quick?*

AJ: *Harding, Toledo, Thomas, Eastside.*

Matt: *Stevens.*

AJ: *Yeah, Stevens. And yeah, that's all.*

Matt: *Did you say North Fork Elementary?*

AJ: *North Fork, yeah.*

Matt: *And North Fork. Okay.*

AJ: *And that's all.*

Matt: *One, two, three, four, five, six. You have attended six elementary schools, and you are in the fifth grade.*

AJ: *Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well, I'm not changing schools no more. Until I go to North Fork Middle.*

When we later ran the list past Dora, she added in an additional school, bringing the total to seven. If his school changes were split evenly, he would have switched schools nearly every seven months.

The number of schools he has attended is outnumbered by the number of places he has called home. AJ's nonchalant explanations of locations he has lived has surely been developed over the extended amount of time that he has experienced homelessness in the North Fork area. There is a level of vulnerability necessary in sharing descriptions of living conditions. Before, during, and after different recorded conversations AJ and I discussed the set-up of the places he has lived. Knowing that this could be an uncomfortable or difficult topic, I wanted to be sure that AJ was ok with sharing the layout and conditions of each location. His descriptions allowed for further humanization of the lives of individuals experiencing homelessness. AJ has lived in numerous different parts of this small southeastern city and fits nearly every definition of experiencing homelessness as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 (MV, 2015). He has spent time in emergency shelters, family shelters, hotels, apartments, and houses. He has even been doubled up (maybe tripled up is more accurate) in an apartment that housed 10 of his family members, spanning three generations and three small bedrooms (Figure 4.1). Despite AJ's housing and educational

instability, and thanks to his mother's attentiveness to keeping him in school, he has not been held back and rarely misses a day.

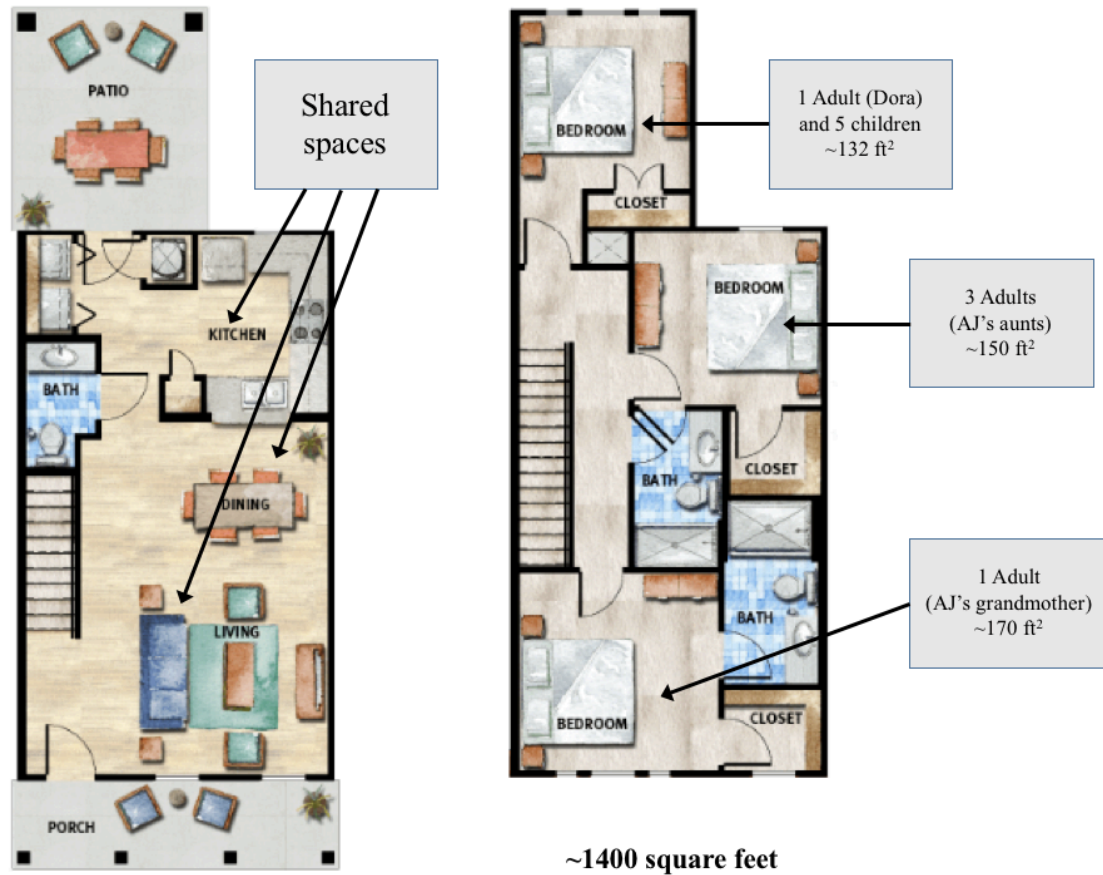


Figure 4.1. Floor plan of AJ's tripled up residence.

When AJ and I first met, he, his mother, and his four younger siblings resided in a local family shelter. In some cases, shelters separate families based on gender and age (Bogenschneider, 2014; LaMarche, 2011). Fathers and adolescent boys are seen as a threat to safety for women and small children so they often are forced to find shelter in different locations. This particular family shelter's policy is to keep families together. AJ shared that they had been there for at least two months. The six family members shared a living space that consisted of a small bedroom and a bathroom (Figure 4.2). Even though

the larger room connected to their living space contained enough bunk beds for each of the five children to have their own place to sleep, the entire family chose to share the one bedroom. Maybe for security. The bunk bed room also housed other individuals which changed on almost a nightly basis. The room AJ and his family chose had a door. Maybe for comfort. The room they chose to share had a queen size bed, a TV, and a connected bathroom. Maybe for familiarity. They have moved around so often and have shared even smaller living spaces, like the “studio” hotel room with two full size beds intended to house four people.

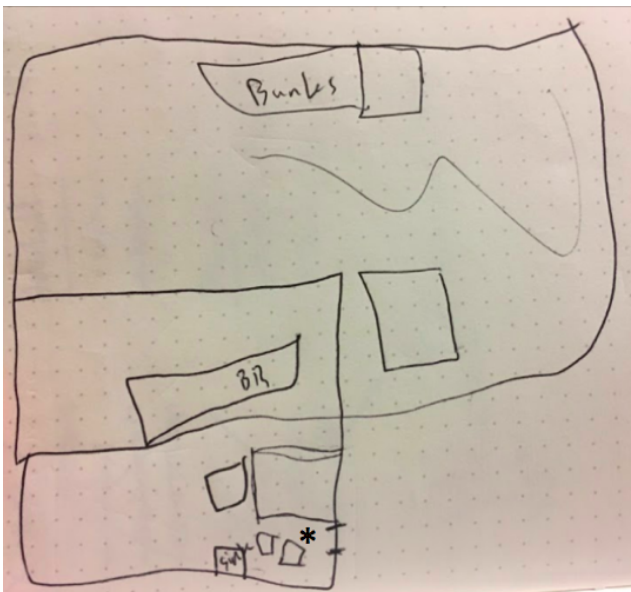


Figure 4.2. A floor plan, created by AJ, of the living space shared by the six family members.

Security for possessions was a theme that appeared across the data. AJ and his younger, elementary aged brother both made mention of where in the family living space I could find the lockers where personal items could be stored and locked away during the day (indicated with a * in Figure 4.2).

AJ: *There's bunk beds. And a sink, and lockers.*

Matt: *Show me where that is. Where's the TV?*

AJ: *It's like, up here. It's like all the way ... Like, say you zoom in to this. Like, it's all the way back there. It's in front of the bed. And it got a sink right here beside it.*

Matt: *Okay. Yeah, draw it in there.*

AJ: *Like right here.*

AJ: *And it got, like, all our stuff... (points to the lockers)*

Matt: *All your stuff?*

AJ: *Yeah, like in the lockers!*

It is common practice for shelters to limit access during the business day (personal communication, director of NF area homeless shelter, July 16, 2016). Most shelters do not allow individuals experiencing homelessness to leave their items during the day. If they brought items in with them the previous night, the same items must leave in the morning. The shelter that AJ and his family called home allowed for personal items to be left during the day but provided no guarantees about security. The shelter installed lockers in individual rooms and requires that residents furnish their own locks. Luckily, Dora works at a variety store where they sell locks.

The day that AJ and I crafted a map of his school was also the only time I witnessed him display any sort of fear or concern. Before we began crafting the map, AJ asked me if I would like to see the new protective case he got for his phone. He was very excited about sharing, and his excitement had me intrigued. He patted his pants pockets, his jacket pockets, and looked under the chair.

Matt: *Did you just give your phone to your mom?*

AJ: *No.*

Matt: *No you didn't? Yeah, I'll see it.*

AJ: *It's blue and black. Oh no.*

It was at this moment that his face changed. His smile disappeared and he began to frantically look for the phone in and under the couch, in his grandmother's kitchen, under the kitchen table, and he completely dumped the contents of his backpack out and on to the table. As he rummaged through the contents of his bag, he said

My phone was in here. Oh no, it's... [continues to rummage around until he finds an interior zippered pocket that didn't dump its contents] Oh, I got scared.

As quickly as his discomfort appeared it was gone. Relief gave way to easy going conversation where he shared with me the possibilities of his new phone case. What AJ demonstrated is not uncommon for youth experiencing homelessness. Nalkur (2009) stated that "Material possessions may represent a sense of permanence in a relatively unpredictable lifestyle" (p. 331). In classrooms and schools, possessions almost serve as a shield against marginalization. Horowitz, Boardman, and Redlener (1994) described how students experiencing homelessness experience bullying at the hands of their classmates due to lack of keeping up with the fashion trends of consumer culture. AJ's phone is more than just a personal item. The phone aids him in navigating relationships with peers through staying in connection with them via social media. It also serves as a sort of benchmark that puts him within the ranks of those who own a smartphone. Roschelle and Kauffman (2004) refer to these acts as "strategies of inclusion" (p. 31). Strategies of inclusion could include

- forging friendships, something that AJ has accomplished;
- covering, a move to make the stigma of homelessness less obtrusive; and
- passing, making the stigma invisible.

AJ's use of his phone is most closely aligned with passing. He uses his phone to give the appearance of stability in both its possession and in the artifacts he creates with it.

AJ's physical possessions are not his only security concern. His classification as experiencing homelessness is something that he holds in confidence with only a few trusted individuals. He believes that only two teachers know about his experiences and he likes it that way.

They the only two people that even know... Like we're not supposed to tell nobody. And like I don't want to tell them anyway.

Before AJ leaves the shelter each morning he secures his physical possessions in the available lockers, entrusting that they will hold throughout the day. He then ventures to school where he interacts with human beings he cannot control with locks and steel. He needs to rest in the assurance that his trusted caring adults will maintain their security.

Even though AJ's family chose to share one small room, he often spoke with excitement about his personal space:

I just can't wait to decorate my room.

The constant mobility and instability that he and his family have experienced has resulted in sharing other people's spaces and not having anywhere to call his own. For example, the "studio" hotel room referenced above not only corralled Dora, AJ, his four siblings into one tiny hotel room. This hotel serves as one of North Fork's designated locations that accepts hotel vouchers from social service organizations or government

agencies (personal communication, NF community agency). AJ and his family were not the only ones squished into a small hotel room. The hotel also houses another 120 individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Another example of limited space comes from the time his immediate family shared his grandmother's townhome. AJ, his mother, and four siblings shared a little over 132 square feet. If the space was divided evenly, he would have 22 square feet to call his own. That is smaller than a 4' by 8' sheet of plywood.

AJ's description of the shelter makes it sound like it is a place that he has at least some freedom to move around and spread out. Still, those movements around the shelter are controlled and limited based on other individuals. In describing the shelter, AJ shared

But there's one room in front of [the cable provider office], inside the shelter. And that's all the room that got Wi-Fi. And when nobody was in there, like, when nobody lived in that room, I would go in there all the time. And just stayed in there, too. Like, all night. But somebody got that room. Somebody moved in the room, so I can't go in there no more.

None of the space that he lives in is his alone. Everything is shared. We talked about the shelter and how he shares space with other individuals. I asked him to draw a picture (Figure 4.2) of the layout and he said

AJ: *It's hard to draw it. I'll try. Like ...*

Matt: *Is it just one room that you all stay in, or is it like an apartment?*

AJ: *No, some of the people stay in one room [indicated with a # in Figure 4.2]. We don't. We stay in a big room [indicated with a & in Figure 4.2].*

Matt: *Okay. And then who's in the bunk beds?*

AJ: *[None of us] sleep in [the room indicated with # in Figure 4.2]. This whole thing is a room. We all sleep in here [referring again to the room indicated with a & in Figure 4.2]. But if we want to, we can sleep in [# in Figure 4.2]*

Perhaps the close proximity to others, and lack of power over his living situation, is why he focuses so intently on his phone and social media persona. His phone, cracks and all, is his to control, decorate, and protect. Similarly, his Instagram page is his and only his. The images he posts are of his creation and choosing; nothing about the profile is explicitly dictated by others but it is crafted for their engagement. AJ educated me on Instagram. He, in his role as expert in his own lived experience, tried to pedagogically share with me what a selfie was without coming right out and saying that he assumed I did not know what one was.

AJ: *You know what Instagram is? I get on Instagram and talk to my cousins and my friends and stuff. I like taking pictures. Yeah. I like taking pictures of you know, like, in the mirror?*

Matt: *Yeah?*

AJ: *You like this [pretends to take a picture looking in the mirror]. The camera facing the mirror like that. I was taking pictures like that.*

Matt: *Selfies or whatever?*

AJ: *Yeah! When I first get ready for school or something. When I'm playing sports... My dad got Instagram too.*

Matt: *Yeah?*

AJ: *My whole family, now they've all got Instagram. I'm going to show you.*

AJ's Instagram account is a significant support for his funds of identity as demonstrated by its routine mention in transcripts and its location in his significant circle (indicated with a *I in Figure 4.5).

AJ likes school. I asked him if he feels supported by his teachers and he shared that the teachers care about and support every student.

I get help from all my teachers, yeah. Teachers help at school, it's good. Mm-hmm (affirmative). All the students.

His evidence included teachers' responses to bullying.

I don't get bullied at school. If you're getting bullied they will help you out of something. I saw someone getting talked about, and the teacher came out helped them, and told them not to listen to them.

Another example included how teachers provide food for students who are hungry.

Matt: *Do they have any programs or anything special? Like, if someone were to miss breakfast, is there a possibility for them to still get breakfast food?*

AJ: *Yeah. Mm-hmm (affirmative), or the teacher will give you a snack or something.*

Even though only a select few of his teachers are openly familiar with his housing instability, AJ feels supported by all of his teachers. He enjoys math and seemed interested to find out that I was and consider myself to still be a math teacher

AJ: *What do you teach?*

Matt: *I taught math.*

AJ: *Oh! Every school you go to?*

Matt: *No. Back when I was a teacher, when I lived in Texas, I taught math to 8th graders, and 9th graders at two different schools. I got taught at one school for a couple of years, and I taught at another school.*

AJ: *What about in Athens?*

Matt: *At Athens, I teach college kids about teaching. It sounds kind of weird.*

AJ: *Like you teach them how to teach?*

Matt: *At least I try to.*

Little exchanges like this one may seem inconsequential but they helped to build AJ's and my relationship. Paris (2011) describes the need for dialogue and mutual respect in humanizing research. I learn about AJ; it is only fair that he learns about me. He also enjoys science, and relayed, with great levity, his feelings about Adolf Hitler, the Holocaust, and World War II.

AJ: *When they showed a picture of him on the smartboard, everybody started laughing.*

Matt: *He's a goofy looking dude, isn't he?*

AJ: *Yeah, he's got one mustache. Like a square [holds two fingers up under his nose]. He didn't like people with brown hair, and dark eyes...*

Matt: *Which is funny, he had brown hair right?*

AJ: *[with enthusiasm and a questioning smirk on his face] MMM-HMMM!*

Random conversations about school and his making sense of the world's ills were the reinforcements I needed to persevere in this work. AJ provided me with reminders of the promise and possibility present within young adolescents. He single handedly challenged my perceptions of homelessness.

AJ's Funds of Identity

This project sought to address the limited documentation and consideration of young adolescents experiencing homelessness. This study frames young adolescents' funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2012) as being socially and contextually constructed and acknowledges how larger society controls the dominant narrative surrounding homelessness while excluding the voices of those experiencing it. The first research question that guided this qualitative inquiry was *What funds of identity do students experiencing homelessness possess?* In order to address this research question, AJ and I created maps of the shelter (Figure 4.2), his school (Figures 4.3 & 4.4), a significant circle (Figure 4.5), and talked with each other about what he had created. Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014a) describe identity as an amalgamation of “people, skills, knowledge, practices, and resources that people have acquired and now use through their involvement in their various activities, such as in the labor market and in diverse social interactions” (p. 37). They continue and describe identities as social in origin. Individuals see aspects or qualities of others they wish to emulate and try them on (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014a). AJ's funds of identity are a “box of tools and signs” (p. 38) that he can use to make sense of his cultural and historical experiences while navigating school as a young adolescent experiencing homelessness. This next section will describe each of the identity artifacts that AJ created.

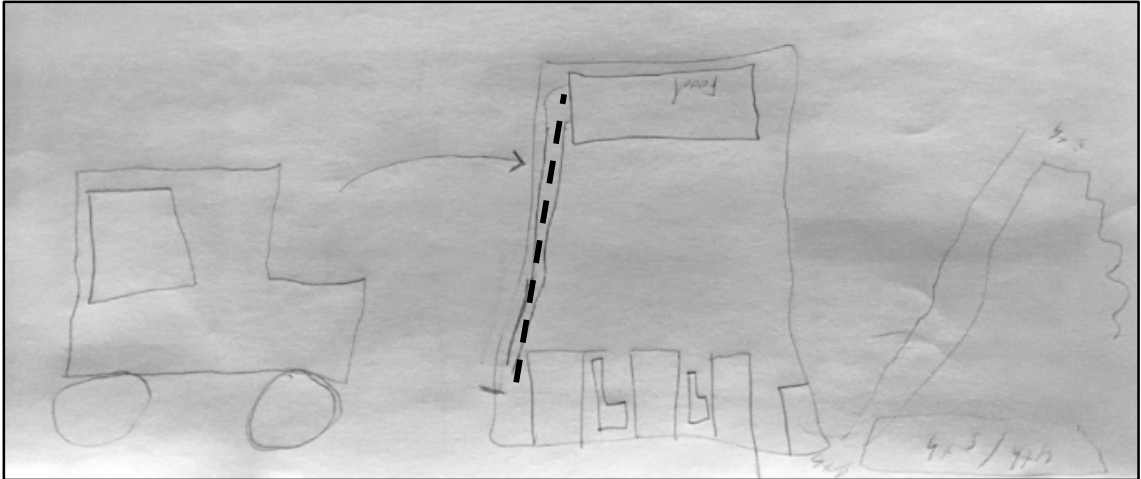


Figure 4.3. AJ's first map of school.

The way that AJ created his map was completely up to him. Pacheco and Vélez (2009) argue that maps, by their creator's nature, are "visual artifacts of how people see the world" (p. 288) according to their personal values and perceptions of power relationships. AJ started by drawing the school bus that he rides in on his way to school. While he drew the bus, I asked

Matt: *What time does the bus drop you off, or pick you up in the morning?*

AJ: *Like, 6:40.*

Matt: *Really? Dang. It picks you up over at the shelter?*

AJ: *Yeah.*

Matt: *Are you the first people on the bus?*

AJ: *Mm-hmm (affirmative). We ride the little bus.*

AJ is picked up at 6:40 in the morning so that the bus can drive a little less than three miles to his school which is not in zone for the elementary school he attends. The district sends, in AJ's words, a "little bus" to pick he and his siblings up. This same bus then makes a few more stops on its way to school. The bus is never full unless the driver needs

to run “*double routes*”—when one bus driver is out sick—which AJ tells me is rare. When he arrives at school, AJ enters the cafeteria. I asked him what the cafeteria looked like to him.

AJ: *It's like this big room with tables and everything.*

Matt: *Where do you sit in the room?*

AJ: *No, I don't sit in there. I just get my breakfast and then take it to my classroom. Like those, you got a whole bunch of seats. You know how a cafeteria look?*

Matt: *Yeah, I've been in this cafeteria.*

AJ: *It got seats and everything. Then there's this line. It's hard to explain it because it's so big. There's tape. There's tape you got to walk through. You got to walk in the middle of the tape and you can't get out the line. Then you got to enter, then you got to go in the room and you get your tray, and you know how you do the slide down and get whatever you want what's on the plates in the room?*

I pushed a little bit to find out what he thought about the line on the floor that he had to follow. He shrugged off my line of questioning, saying

Well, they won't really do nothing. They'll just tell you, "Don't forget. You got to get in the tape," like, "Stay in the tape" because that's what you're supposed to do. They won't send you to the office or anything, but they'll just remind you to stay in the tape because they don't want a big line where everybody's everywhere, so everybody got to be in a line in the tape.

AJ takes his breakfast to his homeroom and eats while waiting for the day to begin. AJ then grabbed a second sheet of paper and began to draw the downstairs hallway where the fifth graders have all their core content classes (Figure 4.4).

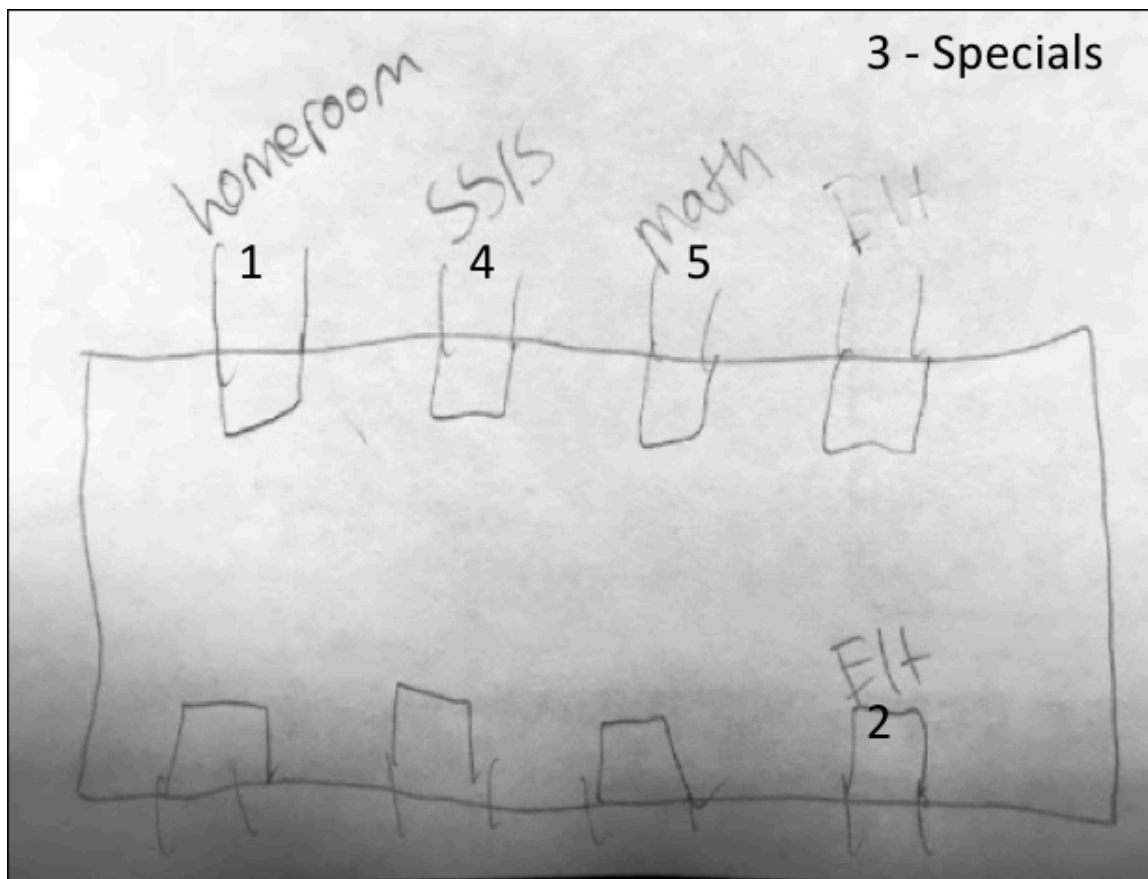


Figure 4.4. AJ's second map of his school. #1 is his homeroom (Ms. Johns). #2 is his ELT (extended learning time). #3 represents his specials, which he attends on a rotating basis (music, P.E., art). #4 is his social studies/science class. #5 is his math class.

AJ's homeroom, Ms. Johns' room, is the first room he comes to in the hallway. Each classroom has its teacher's name written on a street sign hanging just outside and above the door. AJ likes to jump and touch the signs. When he enters Ms. Johns' room, AJ is greeted with a task.

Then there'll be a morning message on the board till [school starts]. We call it the morning message, and it's telling us what we need to do when we first get to school. It's just like, "Read a book," or something and put your book-bag up. You do that. Then when everybody gets there, we got to get in a circle on the carpet and we play a game and do share. We share what we did over the weekend or something.

AJ likes the routines. They help him stay focused. They are something consistent in a life marked with transience.

The day that AJ drew and narrated his map was not a normal day of school. Most days AJ leaves homeroom and goes to ELT. From ELT he goes to specials, which include music, P.E., and art on a rotating basis. After specials, AJ returns to his hallway and attends social studies and science which are taught in the same room by the same teacher. Then, AJ goes to Math, which is followed by Reading. AJ told me that he enjoys switching classes. He has the same schedule as some of his classmates, so he sees them all day long. The day that AJ drew the map just happened to be the day that the “changing bodies” talk was delivered to rooms segregated by gender.

AJ: *A lot of people were laughing at stuff that we saw. Yeah. We didn't do ELT, or math or social studies. We didn't even do specials.*

Matt: *Wow. That's a long day of doing ...*

AJ: *Yeah, it was a long ...*

Matt: *Changing bodies.*

AJ: *Yeah.*

Matt: *Is that the only time that you're ever going to have that lesson at school?*

AJ: *Yeah, that is the only time.*

AJ enjoyed hanging out with his friends all day in the “Changing Bodies” talk but he would have rather gone to P.E. or music.

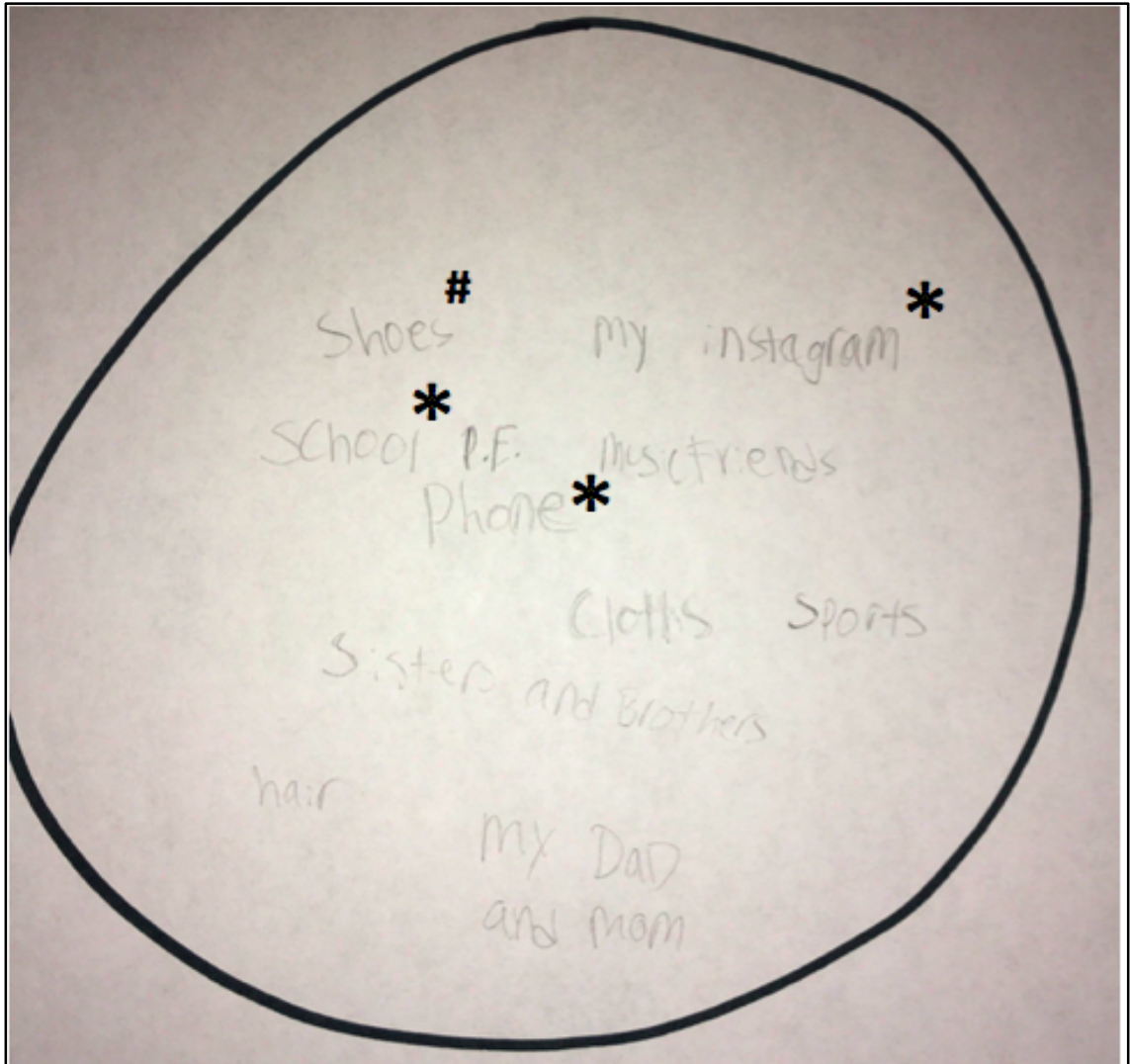


Figure 4.5. AJ's significant circle. Starting at the top and moving from left to right:

Shoes, my Instagram, school, P.E., music, friends, phone (middle), clothes, sports, sisters and brothers, hair, my dad and mom.

Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014a) describe significant circles as relational maps that can be used to elicit funds of identity. The process

involves the person drawing a circle and placing within it the different objects, activities, institutions, and people that he or she perceives as being relevant, important, or significant. Those that are nearest the middle of the image are the most important for the subject. (p. 41)

AJ's significant circle included 14 different persons, places, or things. He started by promptly placing his phone in what he considered to be the center of the circle. AJ built out from the center of his significant circle by adding things (*shoes, my Instagram, clothes, hair*), people (*friends, sisters and brothers, my dad and mom*), and activities (*school, P.E., music*).

This next section will explore AJ's self-assigned and outwardly ascribed social, practical, and institutional funds of identity.

Social Funds of Identity

Esteban-Guitart (2012) states that social funds of identity include significant others such as partners, spouses, relatives, friends, and colleagues. Humans are social beings and much of our identity is informed by the interactions we have with others, especially the others we find ourselves interacting with on a consistent basis. Joves, Siques, and Esteban-Guitart (2015) boil the concept of social funds of identity to its purest state, i.e., "relevant people" (p. 70). Who are the relevant people in AJ's life and how does their influence inform his day-to-day interactions? AJ depicted his social funds of identity through the artifacts he created as a means of externalizing his internalized beliefs. Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014a) state that

people form their identities (visions of themselves) through these acquired resources by engaging in social activities and by observing how members interact.

More specifically, social institutions and practices (work, school, church, sport) work as a hub of activities, resources, and patterns of identity that are available to children. And this, directly or indirectly, through explicit or implicit educational processes, forms their identities. (p. 38)

The two social funds of identity that AJ relayed to me in his identity artifacts and accompanying conversations are (1) his friends and (2) his family.

Friends. AJ has attended half of the elementary schools in NFSD and says that he has friends at every single school with whom he keeps in contact via social media (mainly Instagram and YouTube). He is looking forward to being reunited with many of these friends next year as he transitions into North Fork Middle School, a middle school that enrolls students from five of the seven elementary schools that AJ has attended. I wore a hooded sweatshirt for that middle school one evening while AJ and I ate dinner. He mentioned his excitement of attending North Fork Middle and I responded by pointing to my hoodie

Matt: *Yeah? Awesome. Bear Nation, right?*

AJ: *Oh! That's what that (points at my sweatshirt) means? Because my friend, he's in my class. He's got a lot of shirts like that. He's got an all black shirt. He's got that same jacket. I was wondering what Bear Nation means!*

Matt: *Yeah. The principal over there, he's really cool. I think you'll like him. He's a good dude.*

AJ: *That's their mascot?*

Matt: *Yeah. The Bear.*

AJ: *Oh. I can't wait to go to North Fork Middle, because all my friends at all my other schools I went to, they might be going to North Fork Middle too. And my friends in my class, and all my friends that go to my school right now, are all going to North Fork Middle.*

Matt: *Yeah. I mean, four of these schools that you listed off, they all feed right into North Fork.*

AJ: *Yeah. And I got a lot of friends at each one of those schools.*

Friendship and connection came up multiple times in conversations and AJ's identity artifacts. His friends as a social fund of identity influence AJ's daily interactions. He seemed to imply that he did not have concern about his living situation as long as he had a Wi-Fi connection and could chat with his friends via Instagram. AJ described the space his family shares at the shelter as "boring" because

They don't have Wi-Fi here. There's nothing to do. But there's one room in front and that's all the rooms that got Wi-Fi. And when nobody was in there, like, when nobody lived in that room, I would go in there all the time. And just stayed in there, too. Like, all night. But somebody got that room. Somebody moved in the room, so I can't go in there no more.

Much of AJ's out of school time is spent seeking opportunities to stay connected. He relayed a story to me about how his family was recently told to move into the only room in the building that had access to Wi-Fi. It is significantly smaller than the room he, his four siblings, and his mother have shared for the previous four months. AJ summarized his family's response by saying

Everybody else went mad. I was so happy. I started moving this stuff fast because I don't get to talk to my friends at night time if I was in my bedroom because I didn't have Wi-Fi. Now I do.

His family was less than enthused, but AJ was excited to move and recounted the move with a bit of a chuckle in his voice.

Aside from directly mentioning friends in his identity artifacts, AJ's significant circle (Figure 4.5) referenced three different things that he considered to be significant in his life that related to this social fund of identity: "my phone," "my Instagram," and "school" (They are indicated on Figure 4.5 with a *). Both his phone and the school itself served as mediators of his funds of identity. The phone made it possible to stay connected with friends via Instagram and other messaging platforms and promoted his industrious pursuits of Wi-Fi connections.

The school served as a physical space—or to use Esteban-Guitart and Moll's (2014a) *hub*—where relationships could be built and common experiences had. AJ elaborated upon how the school operates during our map making session and its accompanying conversation. After being dropped off by the bus at the beginning of school, AJ enters the cafeteria and must follow a taped line on the floor as he progresses through the queue lines to get breakfast (indicated with a dashed line in Figure 4.2). He made it very clear that all students must remain quiet and stay within the taped line. He has never seen anyone get punished for non-compliance and said

They'll just tell you, "Don't forget. You got to get in the tape," like, "Stay in the tape" because that's what you're supposed to do.

Instead of eating breakfast in the cafeteria, he takes the stairs that are assigned for 5th graders and proceeds to his homeroom where he eats with classmates and waits for the day to begin.

AJ: *There'll be a morning message on the board till the end. We call it the morning message, and it's telling us what we need to do when we first get to school. It's just like, "Read a book," or something and put your book back up. You do that, then when you do that you ...*

Matt: *What room do you do that in?*

AJ: *My Homeroom. [visible in Figure 4.4]*

Matt: *Homeroom? Which one of these is your Homeroom?*

AJ: *This one. This my Homeroom (labels homeroom on his map). We just in there and do the morning work.*

When AJ talks about his school, the social institution that acts as a hub for identity development (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014a), he speaks with “we” statements as if he is part of a group rather than an individual. Even as I tried to guide him towards “I” statements (e.g., “*what room do you do that in?*”), he quickly switches back to “we” and continues on with describing his day as evident in the response above, he switched from “*my homeroom*” to “*we just in there and do the morning work.*” His friendships and participation in school activities as a student and classmate are all movements of connection and togetherness.

The amount of time AJ waits depends on when he arrives at school but he thinks that it is an average of 40 minutes. He takes a special bus, coordinated by NFSD’s homeless liaison, where he is the very first person picked up in the morning and the very

last person dropped off in the afternoon. This simultaneously serves to promote friendships and limit them. The lack of opportunity to chat with friends led him into the scenario described in the following exchange

AJ: *Yeah. Sometimes they'll have a long route. Like there's two little buses. Sometimes one little bus is gone, so all the kids in that little bus gotta get on the other little bus and the real bus got a whole bunch of kids on it. Like we all got to squish in. So yeah ... Today there wasn't that much ... There was nobody on the bus today. Well, there were some people but not a lot. Like only like three people, including us. So four.*

Matt: *Okay.*

AJ: *Mm-hmm (affirmative). I was bored. Like there was nothing to do, so I just (starts to smile) ... Our bus monitor, he's real old and he talk like ... Our bus monitor is old. He like 50-something. I [AJ's grandmother broke in to the conversation with a witty remark about being 50+ years old]. And I was just bored or something like ... I didn't have no Wi-Fi. Couldn't play on my phone and then so I did ask, "Why do you always wear church shoes in school?"*

Matt: *Oh. You said that to him?*

AJ: *He always wear church shoes everywhere he go. Church shoes.*

Matt: *That's that man's business. [AJ's grandmother laughs]*

AJ: *And he said, "Because I like my church shoes." And I was like, "You can't just go around with church shoes every day." Like he were at church still*

when it's not every day he go to church. Like he doesn't have any sneakers or nothing.

This poor bus monitor was chastised by an 11-year old for wearing church shoes on the bus. Clearly, AJ needs more opportunities to interact with his friends. How this transportation structure supports his funds of identity will be discussed further later in this chapter.

Family. A second social fund of identity for AJ is being a member of a family. This was documented in the significant circle (Figure 4.5), in interviews as described below, and through observation of family interactions during our meeting. I did not just learn about AJ's family, he learned about mine. AJ knows that I have a little brother who lives in California and an older sister who mercilessly picked on me growing up. He knows that I am married and have a son almost the same age as one of AJ's younger siblings. When I would ask him questions about his family, he would often respond with a similar question about my family.

Matt: *Your mom told me that you're going to get to see your dad soon. Do you get to see him a lot?*

AJ: *Mm-hmm (affirmative). Like, for every holiday.*

Matt: *Every holiday?*

AJ: *I'm going up there ... I went up there for Thanksgiving break. And I'm going up there again for Christmas break. Which is next week.*

Matt: *Yeah! I'm excited. Are you excited?*

AJ: *Mm-hmm (affirmative). Are you going out of town?*

Matt: *Yeah. My wife, her family is from Alabama. And so, we're going to go see them. They live pretty much right across the state line. So it's not all that far away.*

AJ: *Is your son going to get a lot of presents?*

Through all of our interactions I felt that AJ genuinely wanted to learn about me. It made the interaction more genuine. Instead of me taking without giving, there was a mutual give and take of information that resulted in us sharing a compiled pot of knowledge.

My initial interview with AJ included the creation of a family constellation, which has been recreated for clarity with identifying information removed in Figure 4.6.

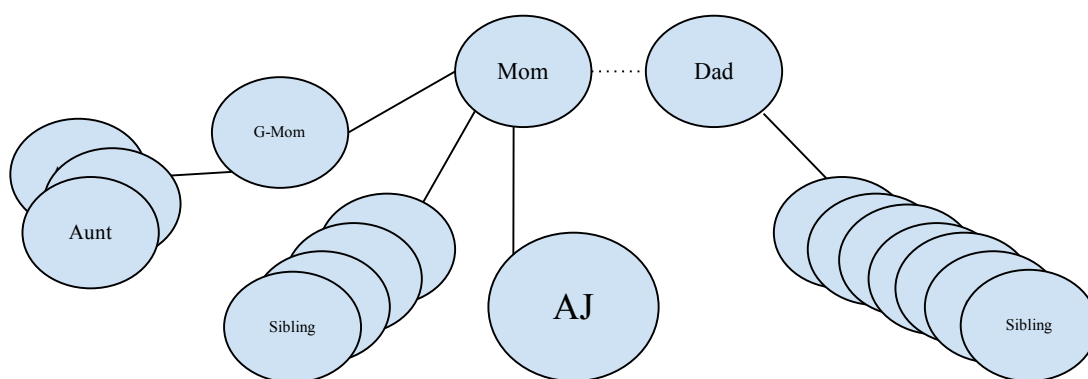


Figure 4.6. AJ's family constellation.

AJ is the oldest of 12 siblings, four of which currently live with him and his mother in the family shelter. The other seven are technically half-siblings and reside with his father who lives roughly 100 miles away. AJ cannot remember all of their names but knows for certain that they all start with an A.

AJ: *And there's a new baby. I had a new baby sister, like, last month. But I don't know her name.*

Matt: *You don't know her name. But it probably starts with an A.*

AJ: *(chuckles and smiles) Yeah.*

AJ attends the same school as two of his siblings, ages seven and nine, and serves as a caregiver for them before school, on the bus, and while his mother works. I asked him about the relationship he has with the siblings with whom he lives. He told me that they don't get along but

They're related, like ... Yeah. I still love them.

He may care about them more than he verbally lets on. On his significant circle (Figure 4.5) AJ lists his sisters and brothers closer to the center of the circle than his dad and mom. The directions of the significant circle activity asked AJ to record significant persons, places, and things with the caveat of proximity to the center meaning more significant. I can understand AJ's feeling. I only have two siblings, and I never had to share a significantly limited amount of space with them for extended periods of time.

The way that AJ carries himself around his younger siblings is one of warm demander (Bondy & Ross, 2008). During our initial meeting, I took note of how AJ postured himself while interacting with his siblings. He appears much older than his siblings. This might have to do with his height. He is only two years older than his sister, but easily a foot taller. He is also as tall, or taller than, his mother. By virtue of the space that he takes up in the apartment, his calmness in the midst of his siblings' noise, AJ gives off an air of support. Almost like a star with smaller planets rotating around him at ridiculous speeds. Not once did he raise his voice or exhibit frustration with his siblings' hyperactivity. The closest he came to voicing dissatisfaction with his siblings was in describing his rationale for leaving his computer at school out of fear of it getting broken at the shelter. Youth experiencing homelessness, according to the literature, are required to mature faster than their stably housed peers (Benson & Johnson, 2010). The authors

believe that this is out of necessity to provide for themselves but in AJ's case, its purpose is for his younger siblings.

In addition to his younger siblings, AJ spoke of his father often. AJ identifies with his father. Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014a) said "People actively appropriate discourses, narratives, and visions or models of identity" (p. 38). AJ and his father share a first name and much of AJ's identity is largely influenced by a desire to be like his father. These aspirations include career ambitions as a musician and fashion choices like having a grill. AJ's interest in rap music is largely influenced by his father. He told me

My dad and my little, my 14-year-old cousin is a rapper. They rap a lot. Like, both of them are always making freestyles on their phones and stuff... You know what WorldStarHipHop is? My dad wants to be on that. Mm-hmm (affirmative). I think I might be able to make a song on that.

It seems that if his father is interested in it, so is AJ.

During breaks from school—like spring, thanksgiving, or winter break—AJ stays near his father but not with him. AJ and I have not discussed why he does not stay with his father, but he believes that in the not too distant future, he will move in with his father. AJ's significant circle (Figure 4.5) lists his father first followed by his mother. This significant change in order caught my attention because of the idiomatic nature of referring to parents as mom and dad versus dad and mom (Cooper & Ross, 1975). It almost feels unnatural and incorrect to refer to my parents as dad and mom versus mom and dad. AJ creates a life that he wants through his use of technology (e.g., the cultivated Instagram account and YouTube videos). AJ's desire to live with his father may be a similar idolized creation. Perhaps he views the life his father has—style, rapping, living in

a big city—as disconnected from homelessness. AJ’s mother is connected to his current reality of living within a shelter. He can imagine a life with his father, but it is aspirational in ways that the internet can be.

As documented in my field notes from conversations with AJ’s grandmother, AJ’s mother, Dora, has fought tooth and nail to keep her family together. Regardless of how often they move, Dora’s first directive in each setting is to enroll her children in school or ensure their access to transportation. The director of the shelter shared that Dora is strong and focused (personal communication, shelter director).

Dora works as many hours as her variety store job will allow Mondays through Fridays. She works from eight in the morning until five in the evening with a total of an hour for breaks throughout the day. When the work she is paid for is done, she walks from her job to either the shelter or her mother’s apartment to dive back in to the more than full time job of being a single mother to five children under the age of 12.

Weekends are reserved for family and Dora needs every minute to make sure she and her children are taken care of. The shelter does not allow families to stay on grounds during the day so Dora and her kids walk to parks or, to AJ’s delight, places with free Wi-Fi. Dora’s exhaustion is recognizable and almost tangible. She constantly apologizes for everything as if she has orchestrated the events that have landed her in the shelter. Pimpare (2017a) and Gorski (2011) would say that society has told her it is her fault.

AJ’s desire to move in with his father could be in response to Dora expecting a lot from him. He is the oldest of the five and more than a foot taller than all of his younger siblings. I have witnessed how Dora tasks him with corralling his siblings and helping her

manage the younger members of the family. Sometimes Dora's expectation of AJ is simply that he not be around and contributing to the ruckus. He is routinely sent on errands with his "aunties." On multiple occasions, when I arrived for our meetings, he was out with one of his aunts, riding shotgun in a beat up old truck that sounds like a roaring lion. AJ loves Dora. It may not be vocal but is obvious. He respects her and has never displayed anything less than adoration towards her. Even in the midst of punishment, he recognizes that she is his mother and he loves her without condition. Despite research describing students experiencing homelessness' early adoption of adult mindsets (e.g., Benson & Johnson, 2010), AJ may carry himself with maturity but has not detached himself emotionally from his mother.

AJ also spends a significant amount of time with his grandmother and three aunts. At one time AJ, Dora, four younger siblings, three aunts, and AJ's grandmother all lived in the same townhome apartment (Figure 4.1) and shared approximately 1,400 square feet of public housing living space. Ten people, from three different generations, shared the space. According to Public Housing Occupancy Handbook Directive Number 7465.1 (USHUD, 1987) more than two individuals can share a room, size permitting. The Building Officials and Code Administrators (1999) state that a dwelling should have at least 150 square feet for the first occupant and an additional 100 square feet per person. Technically, the town home the family shared meets these qualifications (Table 4.1). The Building Officials and Code Administrators also provide recommendations for bedrooms. They suggest that a room must be at least 70 square feet for a sole occupant. If the room is shared by more than one person, each person should have at least 50 square feet of space. This would mean that Dora, AJ, and the four younger siblings would need a room

that is 300 square feet. This is not the case. In actuality, each member of AJ's immediate family was allotted roughly 22 square feet, less than half of the Building Officials and Code Administrators' recommendation.

Table 4.1

Building Officials and Code Administrators equations for square footage.

First Occupant	Additional Occupants	Total	Comparison to 1400 ft ² space
<i>grandmother</i>	<i>3 aunts, Dora, AJ, 4 siblings</i>		
150 ft ² <u>Rooms</u>	+ 9(100 ft ²) <u>Recommendation</u>	= 1050 ft ² <u>Estimate</u>	Townhome acceptable <u>Meets recommendation</u>
<i>grandmother's</i>	<70 ft ²	~170 ft ²	Yes
<i>3 aunts</i>	<150 ft ²	~150 ft ²	Yes
<i>Dora, AJ, 4 siblings</i>	<300 ft ²	~132 ft ²	No

The close proximity of these living quarters made interactions interesting but AJ's relationship with his aunts and grandmother remained strong.

One evening, after AJ and I had finished eating pizza and talking, AJ's eldest aunt approached him about getting in trouble at school that day. AJ rolled his eyes playfully and turned away from her. She reached out quickly and shoved him lightly and told him, "Stop playing!" He responded quickly by grabbing her arm and grappling with her. With incredible ease, she lifted him completely off the ground and held him above her head. He giggled and squealed "put me down!" Just as easily as he was hoisted above her head, AJ was tossed onto the sectional couch. He tried to save face "You stop playing!" His aunt replied, "You know I love you." He responded, "Yeah" and a smile broke across his face.

The time that AJ spends with his grandmother and aunts is part of what helped develop his family fund of identity. Esteban-Guitart (2012) describes how day-to-day interactions influence identity, “The study of identity should not be on a representational level, but on the everyday activities and encounters with the world when identities are shown, constructed and shaped” (p. 174-175). AJ shared,

I hang out with my grandma every day. Because every time we get out from school, the bus stops right here and drops us off.

Wrestling matches with his aunt, like the one described above, are not uncommon. AJ was never truly scared for his safety. Even lifted above his aunt’s shoulders he was more comfortable than he would be in the shelter. The amount of time that he is able to spend with caring adult family members seems to impact the way he views his living situation, with that playful interaction with his aunt as an example of care and comfort. The shelter is just a place he stays. Family members like his aunts and grandma provide him support and a physical place that he can stretch out.

Practical Funds of Identity

Practical funds of identity include “any activity such as work, sports, and music” (Esteban-Guitart, 2012, p. 177). Joves and colleagues (2015) describe practical funds of identity as significant activities that individuals participate in that impact their lived experience. AJ has many significant activities that he takes part in, including but not limited to being a student, caring for his siblings, and exercising his agency and resourcefulness to meet his needs as a student experiencing homelessness. A practical fund of identity that I observed and spoke with AJ about is his identity as a creator, an identity that seems to buttress his connections with friends.

Creator. Not only did AJ create identity artifacts as a part of this research project, he creates identity artifacts and tools that promote the further development of his identity in multiple spaces on a daily basis. The identity that AJ has cultivated in online spaces through Instagram posts and YouTube videos serves to both define and reify his relationships with friends and family members regardless of their physical proximity.

AJ talks about Instagram followers as a sort of status symbol and views them as a ticket towards notoriety.

AJ: *Guess what? My friend Beth, she go to my school and she in the fifth grade but not in my class. She got 1,000 followers.*

Matt: *Yeah? You'll get there. Something tells me you'll be there soon.*

AJ: *I know. If I got 1,000 followers, I'm gonna end up getting the check mark. You know what that is?*

Matt: *Yeah, an official account?*

AJ: *Yeah, that means you famous.*

AJ is not only a creator of identity artifacts like significant circles, maps, videos, and pictures. He is also the creator of another life, a cultivated persona that is in no way homeless. His Instagram account is absent of the stigma associated with homelessness (Toolis & Hammack, 2015). He chooses to create these artifacts and post them in ways that do not depict his housing insecurity. AJ records his YouTube videos at his grandmother's apartment. The furnishings of an apartment distract viewers away from dominant narratives surrounding homelessness. Creating videos, taking pictures, furnishings, and brightly colored clothes run counter to the dominant narratives and depictions of homelessness in popular culture (Kim, 2013; Pimpare, 2017a). In some

form or fashion, AJ creates other lives similar to Ari's magazine cut out creations of a different life from *Paper Things* (Jacobson, 2015).

Young adolescents' identities are known to evolve and vary across digital and physical contexts and purposes (Steinkuhler, 2008). The identity that AJ presents to classmates and followers through social media accounts takes work and is a real time commitment. His YouTube channel has short videos of him dancing or rapping. The videos may be short, but the work AJ puts in to creating them is substantial. He told me that if he posts a rap video he needs to

- (1) write it using the notes app on his phone,
- (2) rehearse the rap,
- (3) find a good backdrop,
- (4) enlist a family member to hold the phone while recording, and
- (5) find a place that has the Wi-Fi bandwidth to upload a video to YouTube.

Instagram posts are similarly cultivated and come with another set of considerations.

AJ experienced a bit of a crisis when this creator fund of identity was put at risk, *I got scared one time. I thought my Instagram got deleted. I thought my aunty did it, because when I was visiting her I was making my little cousin, Cory, an account. And so he said, "Can you put your Gmail for me?" And so I put my Gmail in and so he had an account, but he was signed into my Gmail on it, though. So, my aunty called me and said, "AJ, what's Cory's password on his tablet?" And I was like, "I forgot it." And so she changed it herself, but when she changed his, she ended up changing mine too. I didn't know the password and I asked her, "You messed up my Instagram. What's the password?" She didn't say*

nothing. She didn't even respond back. So I had to sign in, get help signing in, and I just signed in on my own. My name, my username. I typed that in and then I could log in. I got scared though.

AJ wanted to be able to connect with Cory on Instagram to the point that he allowed Cory to use his personal Gmail account and almost lost his account in the process. As an adult, I get frustrated when I forget passwords. I am so used to having immediate access that the inconvenience of needing to wait for something is upsetting. There are a few differences between my experiences with forgetting passwords and AJ's:

1. Unlike AJ, I have a personal internet connection and do not need to find strategic places around the city to gain access,
2. Unlike AJ, I have a personal phone line that I can use as long as I am in a location that has cell service, and
3. Unlike AJ, my connection to stability and familiarity is not dependent upon gaining access to a social media account.

The conversations about school that occurred while making maps showed the relationship between school and AJ's identity as a creator of art, especially music. He enjoys music class. The opportunities available in his music class are influenced by student choice and include learning to play the guitar. The influence of music ripples out from school and is also found in his YouTube videos where he dances and sings. Music, art, and physical education are on a rotating schedule at AJ's school and he only has music class every third day. He enjoys the topics of all three classes, but finds the content of his art class boring and unengaging. He said

Everybody hates art. Nobody likes art. It's so boring. It's just like, we always have to color and junk. They make us color with crayons and markers. Like, boring baby stuff. Like, not even kindergartners like art. Nobody likes art. Everybody walks into art and they'd [shrug and tune out]. Art teacher be sitting there still talking like she don't care. She would just keep teaching. She think we like art, but we don't.

AJ continued by sharing his desire for a different art class.

AJ: *It's so boring. It's just like, we always have to color and junk.*

Matt: *Oh. Like, they let you just do whatever you want? You told me you like to draw.*

AJ: *Yeah. They make us color with crayons and markers. Like, boring baby stuff.*

Matt: *Really?*

AJ: *Mm-hmm (affirmative). Like, not even kindergartners like art. Nobody likes art. Everybody loves P.E. Some people like music. In music, they're teaching us how to play guitars.*

There exists a digital disconnect between how AJ engages with art and what his teachers believe he is capable of. The artistic elements of his Instagram pictures and YouTube videos show a young adolescent who is willing to take risks and try different things.

The digital disconnect begs the question, *Why don't adults (teachers, administrators, stakeholders, etc.) allow young adolescents to use the internet freely in school spaces?* So much of AJ's identity is influenced by his access to an internet connection and social media tools. His phone is a connection to and creation tool of

another life. Do the risks of opening up the internet for youth out-weigh the rewards? AJ should be allowed to use the internet. It is something that he uses to keep in touch with friends. It brings him joy. Similar to the vignette about my sister from chapter two except in AJ's case it is internet access rather than cigarettes and coffee. His right to joy, happiness, and escape should not be revoked simply because he experiences homelessness.

Institutional Funds of Identity

Institutional funds of identity include “any social institution, such as family, marriage, or the Catholic Church” (Esteban-Guitart, 2012, p. 177). Family, described above as a social fund of identity, also finds itself within the definition of institutional funds of identity. An institutional fund of identity can be better understood as a reference to the social institution rather than the social institution itself (Joves, et al., 2015). AJ's quote from above referencing his siblings –

They're related, like ... Yeah. I still love them

–exemplifies the thought behind institutional funds of identity. AJ is referring to his siblings as being members of the social institution of family almost as if by membership he must love them. The institutional fund of identity that will be elaborated upon below is AJ's reluctant qualification of meeting the definition of homeless.

Homeless. Yes, AJ meets United States Federal Government MV definition of “homeless.” He does not actively choose to take on the identity of homeless and even changed the subject on multiple occasions when we discussed his housing instability. Esteban-Guitart (2016) describes identity as

... partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the mis recognition of others, and so a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. (p. 45)

AJ's homelessness is an outwardly ascribed institutional fund of identity. As a young adolescent experiencing homelessness, he suffers "real damage, real distortion" (Esteban-Guitart, 2016, p. 45) at the hands and agendas of other individuals. These agendas impact his day-to-day life in multiple ways. One such way brings us back to Tierney and Hallett's (2010) concept of border guards as the individuals who limit access to marginalized populations. Just as researchers have intentions, so do border guards. AJ operates within an NFSD mandated shroud of secrecy, often unbeknownst to him, from the time he boards the school bus in the morning and is dropped off again in the afternoon (personal communication, NFSD homeless liaison).

AJ: *[The bus] picked me up from the shelter, but we're first though. So when we get on the bus in the morning, there's nobody on the bus. When we get off the bus, there's nobody on the bus. Unless they do double routes.*

Matt: *Oh, does that happen a lot?*

AJ: *Mm-mm (negative).*

Matt: *No? Okay. I understand why they do that, because they want to keep you safe, right? They want to make sure that nobody sees where you get picked up, nobody sees where you get dropped off.*

AJ: *So I don't know how they feel. I don't know why they picking me up first and dropping me off last.*

One of the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 (MV, 2015) stresses that barriers to school attendance should be removed and students experiencing homelessness need to have the option to stay in what is referred to as their “school of origin” (§ 722) regardless of where they live. The shelter where AJ and his family reside is not located within the zone of the school that AJ attends. In order to remain enrolled and have transportation, AJ’s day starts earlier than most of his classmates. He is the first student picked up in the morning. The late bell rings at 7:40am and he is picked up by 6:30am at the latest. In the afternoons when school dismisses at 2:35, he is the last student dropped off, which can happen as late as 4:15pm. On occasion, the morning ride can take between 30 minutes and an hour to travel a little less than three miles. AJ’s life is quite literally put on hold while he is in transit and waiting. Once he arrives at school, his wait continues. After progressing through the morning breakfast queue he is directed towards his homeroom classroom where he must wait for the day to begin, a wait that can stretch to 45 minutes depending on the day. At the end of the day he re-boards the bus. He shared with me that in the afternoons his ride has stretched to at most an hour and a half to cover that same three miles. The scheduled time for AJ to be picked up is an intentional choice of the district intended to promote AJ’s privacy. By being the first student picked up in the morning and the last student dropped off in the afternoon, no other students see AJ’s drop-off location. The stigma of homelessness may necessitate such a move but at the same time, the stigma is controlling AJ’s day and further separating AJ from his friends.

Though AJ technically meets the definition of homeless according to the United States Department of Education, the label, its stigma, and well-meaning pity should not

be a driving force in plotting out his day-to-day actions. In addition to NFSD, AJ's mother, Dora, has also served to ascribe upon him a negative perception of the label of homeless. I asked AJ if any of his friends or teachers know about his living situation and his response was

my mom told me not to tell no one ... Like we're not supposed to tell nobody. And like I don't want to tell them anyway.

AJ feels that if the information were to become common knowledge, he would be made fun of. He said

It's not really...

and then trailed off with a posture of defeat.

AJ's reasoning for not revealing his homelessness, his mother's wishes, and NFSD's secrecy all align with a belief and dominant narrative that experiencing homelessness is something to be ashamed of and hidden from view. The stigma associated with homelessness is well documented in literature. The stigma carries with it many of the dominant narratives described early in this dissertation, including: descriptors like "dirty, hungry, drunken, addicted, or psychotic" (Kim, 2013, p. 294); the belief that "Poor people are broken and need to be fixed" (Pimpare, 2017b, para. 8); a need to feel shame and pity (Pimpare, 2017a); that individuals experiencing homelessness are dangerous to themselves and others (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001; Phelan, Link, Moore, & Stueve, 1997); they pose a threat to the good morals of their stably housed classmates (Crook, 2015); and that they are a nuisance in and out of school spaces (Andreou, 2015). It has been found that a large portion of the United States holds the above mentioned stigmatizing views of individuals experiencing homelessness

(Cozzarelli et al., 2001; Phelan et al., 1997). The National Coalition for the Homeless (2016) documented increased criminalization of individuals experiencing homelessness due the stigma. Of equal importance to the outward effects of the stigma of homelessness, youth experience trouble in their identity development, internalizing the stigma (Toolis & Hammack, 2015).

AJ displayed resistance to identifying as homeless and pushed back against the notion that the label impacts his day-to-day experiences. In member checking the preliminary findings of the study, AJ was reluctant to draw conclusions about the measures the school district took to maintain the anonymity of his housing insecurity. It is standard practice for students from shelters to be picked up first and dropped off last to limit the possibility of other students seeing where students who reside in the shelter are dropped off. AJ said

So I don't know how [the district transportation personnel] feel. I don't know why they picking me up first and dropping me off last.

School district and shelter personnel know the rationale for picking up and dropping off at certain times but AJ is not included or informed of those conversations. The implications of this practice will be discussed in the next chapter.

Interconnectedness of AJ's Funds of Identity

Esteban-Guitart (2012) describes how an individual's funds of identity could simultaneously fall within the bounds of more than one type of fund of identity. Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014a) describe the funds of identity uncovered through identity artifact creation as "internalized meanings from social context" (p. 44). Putting a wall around these internalized meanings and classifying them as solely social or solely

practical ignores the interconnectedness of an individual's funds of identity. Esteban-Guitart (2012) described how multiple funds of identity can converge in "time and space" (p. 178). On occasion, AJ's family as a fund of identity may blur the line between social and institutional funds of identity. AJ's creator fund of identity serves as a tool to connect with friends and family. AJ creates identity artifacts in the form of Instagram pictures and YouTube videos so that he can participate in the social aspects of social media with friends and family. Esteban-Guitart (2012) stresses that funds of identity are historically and socially constructed. AJ's current funds of identity could look different if we were to create a significant circle again or craft a new map of his school. This reality does not make the findings any less valuable or less informative. The stuff of teaching is contextual and teachers must always work to adapt and modify their craft. Teachers must be in constant contact with their students so that students' funds of identity can be identified and incorporated in course curriculum. The funds of identity of young adolescents experiencing homelessness are influenced by the variability of adolescence itself and are compounded by the transience of homelessness. Teachers who interact with students experiencing homelessness on a daily basis must be able to recognize and work with these intersectionalities.

School-Based Structures and Supports for AJ's Funds of Identity

This project's first research *question—What funds of identity do students experiencing homelessness possess?*—focused on documenting the funds of identity of a young adolescent experiencing homelessness in a small city in the southeastern United States. AJ currently resides in a local homeless shelter with his four younger siblings and his single mother and this case study is bounded by those experiences (Stake, 1995). AJ

revealed four funds of identity that are interwoven together across his day-to-day experiences. They were friends, family, creator, and homeless.

The second research question of this qualitative case study informed by humanizing research was *Are these funds of identity supported, if at all, by school structures and personnel?* The sections that follow depict AJ's and my thoughts on how his funds of identity, as a young adolescent experiencing homelessness, are both supported and limited by school structures and personnel. Before progressing any further, I need to make clear that it is nearly impossible to draw a line in the sand to qualify a fund of identity as being either completely supported or unsupported. Homelessness, its variables and influences, form a tangled knot of sorts that is seemingly fused together and permanently entangled. These sections will describe significant players and policies while troubling their influence on AJ's funds of identity.

AJ's Teachers

The reality that AJ falls within the broad federal government definition of homelessness is not common knowledge at his school. He shared that, to his knowledge, only two of the school's faculty, staff, and administration are aware that he currently resides in a local family shelter.

Matt: *Okay. The label of homelessness. I think that the district, even though the district may not necessarily know you individually-*

AJ: *My friends don't.*

Matt: *Yeah? Your friends don't know because you don't tell them, right?*

AJ: *Mm-hmm (affirmative). The teacher don't know.*

Matt: *The teachers don't know?*

AJ: *Only [Ms. Johns] know, and the counselor.*

Matt: *Only your homeroom teacher and ...*

AJ: *The counselor.*

Matt: *And Ms. Pine?*

AJ: *Mm-hmm (affirmative). They the only two people that even know.*

In actuality, this number is probably larger but not by much. Most teachers are unfamiliar with MV, its calls for supporting students experiencing homelessness, and even who qualifies for services (Hallett, Skrla, & Low, 2015; Tobin & Moulton, 2018). AJ told me that the only two individuals who know of his current situation are his homeroom teacher, Ms. Johns, and the school's counselor, Ms. Pine. Though he stated that all of his teachers support students, he named specifically that Ms. Johns and Ms. Pine provide great support for him, as a person and as a learner.

Ms. Johns. AJ describes Ms. Johns as nosey. He said

She is so nosey! She watches our computer screens all day. The other teachers will look every once and a while but my homeroom teacher always watches, 24/7.

He does not hold the invasion of privacy against her and understands that she is trying to make sure that students are on task.

Some kids playing games on their computer when they're not supposed to.

I laughed at this, half suspecting that he has been counted in the ranks of “*some kids*” due to another exchange we had where he told me “I like to get in some trouble sometimes.”

I wanted to ask him if he feels supported by Ms. Johns but before I could get the full question out he said

Do I think she would tell my friends? No.

This is important. When AJ is at school he does not have to display the *homeless* fund of identity that is outwardly ascribed onto him by district personnel, his teachers, myself, and society's dominant narratives. He can be AJ the friend. He can be AJ the family member. He can be AJ the creator. His teacher knows about the vulnerable state he is in and seeks opportunities to give him the same in school experience as his stably housed classmates and friends. While he is at school in homeroom or one of his other classes, he rests in the confidence that Ms. Johns will keep his secret, relieving anxiety and allowing AJ to interact with friends unhindered by the thought of Ms. Johns revealing his housing situation. The environment that Ms. Johns has helped to cultivate, knowingly or not, is one of support, advocacy, and care which challenges dominant narratives surrounding homelessness. She may not outwardly confront the societal perceptions of homelessness but she has provided a space where AJ is able to emote and display his other funds of identity, adding to the nuance and complexity that is his young adolescent identity.

Ms. Pine. I have not interacted with Ms. Pine but she is well known and beloved across NFSD. She has a reputation for going above and beyond the call of duty to support students, and in AJ's case, his entire family. After AJ revealed that Ms. Pine was one of the two individuals at school who knew about his living situation, I asked him what sort of things she does to help him out. He responded by saying

Like anger issues and stuff. Everybody has them, really.

He is probably right, but it's worth noting that anger issues are not uncommon for students experiencing homelessness (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Stronge & Reed-Victor, 2000). The work on anger management not only addresses the needs of students experiencing homelessness, it also falls in line with a key characteristic from *This We*

Believe: “Comprehensive guidance and support services meet the needs of young adolescents” (NMSA, 2010, p. 37).

Ms. Pine supports AJ’s family as well. She has been in contact with Dora and AJ’s grandmother about connecting them with services and opportunities. She is a force on the ground at AJ’s school and responsible for ensuring that he has transportation on a daily basis. When he and his siblings are in transition from one housing situation to the next, she is the one who contacts the NFSD district office and informs them of any changes.

Another way that Ms. Pine supports AJ’s family fund of identity is through financial assistance. Each time that AJ and I interacted, I received updates on the family’s pursuit of housing. Since we were first introduced, Dora has actively pursued housing through North Fork Housing and Community Development (personal communication, AJ’s grandmother).

The application process required 12 consecutive weeks’ worth of regular and consistent paychecks. When we first met Dora had worked at the same job longer than the North Fork requirement and the family was on a waiting list for an apartment at a reduced price. One of the last things that stood in the way of AJ’s family moving into their own apartment was a down payment (\$300) and first month’s rent (\$52).

Ms. Pine worked her connections and gathered the necessary funds to cover these costs, drove Dora to the housing office, and supervised the process to ensure that Dora was not being taken advantage of. Ms. Pine went above and beyond what is called for in her job

description as a counselor. Her efforts not only impacted AJ's ability to cultivate friendships and ease anxieties, but they also supported his entire family.

School and District Policies

The way that AJ and I were first introduced to each other was a result of district policy dictating how researchers are allowed to approach and identify participants. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 (MV, 2015) requires that school districts and state boards of education collect and maintain a database of information relating to students experiencing homelessness, including the education they receive, their living condition, and an overlaying catch-all of "such other data and information as the Secretary [of Education] determines to be necessary and relevant" (§ 724). These requirements address past injustices leveled against students experiencing homelessness whose education did not have any sort of federal government protection until 1987 (Miller, 2011). Part of this project's necessity was to bring a human face and story to the macro-system level narratives surrounding homelessness. Students experiencing homelessness have an identity inscribed upon them that both supports and restricts their educational experiences. Viewing students identified as homeless through an institutional label simultaneously provides much needed services while also holding the students at a distance from potential supports such as researchers/advocates and friends.

Research study participant recruitment. I began having conversations with school administrators in March of 2017 with an eye for early fall recruitment. My university's Institutional Review Board and NFSD's research liaison granted my study approval after it had been in the process of review for nearly three and a half months. The

NFSD recruitment process was arduous. The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act (NSLA) (2014) is one of the methods by which students experiencing homelessness are identified. The NSLA requires information gathered to be held under strict confidentiality measures and states that revelation of sensitive material—including names, addresses, eligibility status—is punishable by a maximum fine of \$1000 and one-year jail time. The recruitment process for this study included a NSLA defying list of students experiencing housing insecurity sent to my personal email address from the school district's director of homeless education. In an attempt to put us back on the legal track, I provided a packet of recruitment documents, the list of students, and my business cards to a NFSD principal for dissemination and refrained from contacting the individuals myself. This resulted in one potential participant who opted to not participate. The intention was to safely and appropriately connect researcher to participant. The result was a sloppy and, frankly, illegal revelation of private student information through the hands of a district employee.

Even though AJ does attend school in NFSD, I opted to recruit participants from service organizations instead of the school district. He was recruited through a local social service organization that viewed this research as an opportunity that might be beneficial for AJ and his family. There were border guard interactions in each location: the shelter director at the social service organization and the director of homeless education at the NFSD office. Both locations contained a certain level of bureaucracy that need to be addressed but NFSD's reluctance to support research other than the lip service of proposal approval could limit possible researcher/advocates from working with young adolescents experiencing homelessness. When a student's privacy or vulnerability

necessitates defense, border guards must be in place and fight like hell to protect youth. But, a border guard must develop a sense of discernment that scrutinizes wild horsemen in order to ferret out whether or not said horsemen arrive to help or to hinder. Just because a border guard holds a title (e.g., director of homeless education) does not mean that they are the beginning and end of supports for individuals in their charge.

Transportation practices. Ms. Marie is North Fork School District's homeless liaison, a position and person different from NFSD's director of homeless education. Ms. Marie does a fantastic job of keeping up with students and families identified as homeless. She has found ways to circumvent transience and lack of access to reliable and consistent communication and remains in contact with families despite these hurdles. Over the course of the past three school years, she believes that the district has improved greatly in their capacity to identify students in need of services before the families even approach the district for help (NFSD homeless liaison, personal communication, October 3, 2016). Transportation to and from school is the service that she spends most of her work day organizing for the roughly 700 students experiencing homelessness in NFSD.

AJ directly benefits from her diligence with organizing transportation. He relayed a story to me about a string of days where school was canceled due to wintery weather. School was canceled two days in a row and on the eve of the third day, the attendant at the shelter told AJ and Dora that school had been canceled for the following morning. This was actually not the case.

Matt: *That's good. But you're never late?*

AJ: *Mm-mm (negative). I was late on Friday.*

Matt: *You were?*

AJ: *But that's the only reason, because the lady at the homeless shelter said no school, but we did have school. So we slept late and we woke up and we found out we actually did have school. Bus driver said she will come back and pick us up, but she couldn't come ... Like, my mom kept trying to call the district, but they didn't answer. But while we was walking to the bus stop to see if she was gonna come or not, she didn't say if the bus was gonna come or not. The lady that said we don't have school, I said, "Really, we don't have school?" Then she was still saying yes, but she saw me and all my brothers and sisters with book bags on and everything ready for school and waiting for our bus. She know where our bus stop. Like, she was still just standing there, "No school", still just saying that. Like, something wrong with her.*

AJ and his four younger siblings slept in and missed the bus. When he woke up and realized that school had not actually been canceled, Dora phoned the NFSD district office. Eventually she got through to Ms. Marie and transportation was sent to pick up AJ and his school aged siblings. AJ and his siblings wanted to go to school. They enjoy the freedom and normalcy that it provides. They have guaranteed meals, interaction with their friends, warmth, and adult advocates. The transportation policies make it possible for them to experience this normalcy.

Not all aspects of the transportation policy are as equally beneficial to AJ's funds of identity. One of the most influential parts of AJ's life, and his most frequently discussed fund of identity, is the relationship he has with his friends. He referenced them in his significant circle (Figure 4.5) and repeatedly in the conversation that resulted from

our map making exercises (Figure 4.3 & Figure 4.4). As previously mentioned, AJ is the first student picked up by the school bus in the morning and the last one dropped off so that knowledge that he currently resides in the shelter is not revealed to other students. Although this may seem like a noble choice to make, NFSD does not need to protect AJ's anonymity and housing status in such a way. The result is an adolescent in waiting and separation from interacting with his friends. The time that AJ is on the school bus in the mornings is equal to more than 33 total school days¹³. AJ spoke at length about how he keeps in touch with friends and family members via Wi-Fi connection or in person and how he is bored on his long bus rides before and after school.

I was bored. Like there was nothing to do, so I just (starts to smile) ... Our bus monitor, he's real old and he talk like ... Our bus monitor is old. He like 50-something. And I was just bored or something like ... I didn't have no Wi-Fi. Couldn't play on my phone and then so I did ask, "Why do you always wear church shoes in school?"

On the school bus before and after school, he does not have the ability to stay in contact. It is possible for NFSD to pick up students experiencing homelessness in district vehicles other than school buses and deliver them discreetly to school without classmates discovering the rationale for transport. This would not only allow for students like AJ to sleep later in the morning, but it would allow him to reclaim time that could be applied to his funds of identity such as friends, family, and being a creator. In all honesty, AJ could walk home faster than the bus can drive him home.

¹³ Conservative estimate based on the numbers provided earlier in the chapter. Roughly 90 minutes of travel time each day multiplied by 180 days, equals 16,200 minutes of travel time per school year. 16,200 minutes divided by 60 minutes in an hour, equals 270 hours of travel time per school year. Estimating that a school day measure roughly 8 hours, 270 hours divided by 8 hours in a day, equals 33.75 school days.

Personal learning devices and other Wi-Fi enabled technologies. AJ says that the friendships formed at each of the six previous schools he has attended have survived the frequent moves and lack of physical proximity. He believes that this is mostly thanks to the social media and calling apps on his phone. He uses Instagram, YouTube, messenger apps, and phone calling apps to keep in touch with his family and friends from the different schools he has attended. I asked him how many of his friends from the different schools he has attended have phones. He responded with

All of them. If I didn't have my phone, I would be mad because I wouldn't be able to text someone or nothing.

I took note in my field notes about how much AJ returns to his Instagram during our meetings. Over four different conversations, he brought up Instagram 26 times. Sometimes Instagram served as a segue for him to steer the conversation towards topics he wanted to talk about or as a way to distract away from uncomfortable conversations. While we were discussing his penchant for freestyle rap, he skillfully changed the subject from freestyling in school for his teachers to rapping on Instagram.

Matt: *Does your writing teacher give you opportunity to write freestyles or whatever?*

AJ: *No. Even if we did get to do freestyles. It would have to be about school, not about hood rapping stuff. I got a rap on Instagram that I want to show you.*

I got my hopes up that he was about to share one of his personal raps but it was for naught.

Each time that AJ and I get to talk, he provides me with an unprompted update on the number of Instagram followers he has. At last count, he had over 1,000 followers. He wears these numbers like a badge of honor. A portion of these followers are people that AJ has not even met in person. Others are old friends he met while enrolled at the six other schools he has attended. Some are friends with whom he interacts at school, during breaks in the day, during lunch, or in his classes.

AJ: *I just started posting stuff and then I ended up seeing all my friends.*

Matt: *Yeah.*

AJ: *They end up following me and all of them text me, like, "AJ, I didn't know you have Instagram?" I was like, "I just now started." And then that's when I started getting a whole bunch of followers and stuff.*

Matt: *Okay. How many of your friends at school have?*

AJ: *Everybody.*

Matt: *Everybody does?*

AJ: *Like yeah, we all got Instagram. And we all be on Instagram and I'll make a chat and join and invite all my friends and we'll all just be chatting.*

The friendships that he has formed this year, the first at his present school, are some of the most important to AJ. He is concerned that they will find out that he lives in a shelter and not want to be his friends anymore.

I don't want to tell them anyway.

He is hopeful for a time where he does not need to be concerned about being outed as experiencing homelessness. AJ often speaks of that day in the future when he is able to invite friends over without embarrassment;

But when we get an apartment, I hope my friends can come over. Some of them saying they might be moving to the same neighborhood.

Until those days, AJ passes his time and connects with his friends digitally using an android powered smartphone and a Wi-Fi connection. He wields his phone skillfully and uses it to take pictures for Instagram, record videos for YouTube and Instagram Video, listen to music on Spotify, write rap lyrics in note-taking apps, and to make phone calls to family and friends using calling apps. The phone was documented as one of the most important things in AJ's life and he placed it almost in the direct center of his significant circle (Figure 4.5). His phone is a great source of pride. I asked him if he is able to use the phone at school and he responded by saying,

Me and all my friends like to play on our phones at recess. It's kind of like, the teachers will say if you have your phone out or anything, like it's on you. Because if you get it stolen then ... [shrugs] ... But at the same time, they don't really want us on our phones. We can't do nothing on them, though because there are no hotspots, so we just take pictures and listen to music.

With the phone playing such a major part in his life, the school's rather lax technology policy allows AJ to use it at various times during the day and use it as a sort of social currency with his friends.

North Fork School District has also provided Chromebook computers—personal learning devices (PLDs)—for all students to use in and out of school for the past three school years. NFSD states that the PLDs should not drive the curriculum; rather, their purpose is to provide opportunities for students to develop core skills and knowledge through a certain level of creative freedom while knowing that “all activity, including

emails and files, are subject to review and the property of the North Fork School District” (North Fork School District document, n.d.). The district’s move meant that in addition to being able to use his PLD for school assignments in school on the Wi-Fi network, AJ’s family would have a device with which they could access much needed information on the internet as long as they could find a public Wi-Fi network. For Dora, the PLD is the difference between accessing social service registration online and engaging in a process that includes finding the appropriate documents and organizing them for transport, finding someone to watch her children or asking her boss for time off, finding transportation to and from the service office, and waiting in line for service. NFSD is a high poverty school district. In a society where connection to the internet is almost a necessity rather than a luxury, the benefits of PLDs extend far beyond the classroom.

Chapter Summary

Yeah. And like I love shoes. Like I LOVE shoes. Like Jordan and stuff. I love all those shoes. Nike Air Force, yeah, everything. You know what Huarache's is? I got a pair of yellow and green ones and I just now got a new pair of Nikes. I wore them yesterday to church. I'm thinking about putting one of my shoe boxes, like staple it to my wall and then put one shoe inside and put the other shoe on top. Like how the shoe store is. I just can't wait to decorate my room. My own room. Well, me and all the boys that have the same room.

AJ included shoes on his significant circle (indicated with a # on Figure 4.5). I would say that one of his funds of knowledge is shoes. He flipped through pictures on his phone for me and showed off different shoes that he wanted to get. Some to wear, others to just put on display in his room for others to admire when they came in. He wants to share his

space with friends but has not had that option for quite some time. Having the freedom to share space is a privilege. Being forced to share space with your family in a shelter, motel, or someone else's home is a burden.

The identity artifacts that AJ created and the conversations that followed showed a depth to his life that runs counter to dominant narratives surrounding homelessness. Dominant narratives paint a picture of individuals experiencing homelessness as desperate, derelict, and in need of rescue (Pimpare, 2017a). AJ challenges those depictions of homelessness through his funds of identity. The funds of identity documented earlier in this chapter are in no way an exhaustive list of the factors that influence AJ's identity. What we uncovered was a snapshot framed by his historical experiences. Esteban-Guitart (2012) states that there are five main categories of funds of identity: geographical, social, practical, cultural, and institutional. In our conversations and member checks, AJ and I believe that the four funds of identity we discussed—friends, family, creator, and homeless—fall within some sort of overlap of social, practical, and institutional funds of identity. Regardless of the type of fund of identity, there are school structures and personnel that influence AJ's identity. Adult advocates help to remove barriers, calm anxieties, and support not only AJ but his entire family. Not all of AJ's teachers are aware of his living situation and he likes it that way. Some school policies simultaneously support and hinder AJ's funds of identity (e.g., transportation policies sacrifice time with friends for anonymity). Other district wide policies, like PLDs, provide opportunities for entertainment and connect his family to much needed social services.

AJ goes with the flow. As a protagonist he willingly engages with the cast of characters and collects their friendships as mementos.

One afternoon, before our meeting, Dora and I were standing outside of the shelter talking. I could hear the truck roaring before seeing it. As it rattled around the corner and roared into view, I saw AJ riding in between his twin. The truck doesn't have a radio but all that the three passengers needed for entertainment was each other. Huge smiles were spread across their faces. The truck lurched to a stop in front of Dora and I. AJ climbed over his aunt—it was either Hilary or Gayle, I have a hard time telling them apart—hopped out of the cab and looked back in the window, saying “Thanks. That was fun. I’ll text you later!”

Good times are connected to people and he never wants the good times to stop.

AJ approaches the struggles associated with homelessness and mobility with aplomb. During our sessions he never seemed to be experiencing the stress and anxiety associated with those experiencing homelessness that I have read about so often (e.g., Briggs et al., 2013; Grant, Gracy, Goldsmith, Shapiro, & Redlener, 2013; Obradović et al., 2009; Taylor, Gibson, & Hurd, 2015). That being said, he simultaneously challenges and is shaped by the dominant narratives surrounding homelessness. The implications and a discussion of the findings described above will be presented in the following chapter, along with a summary of the dissertation.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, AND IMPLICATIONS

Late Afternoon on a Football Gameday

In the south, football is big. Especially in a college town. Big games. Big emotions. Big business. The small southeastern city that shares its land with one of its state's large research universities starts to buzz on game days. People flood into the city from all over the state as if game day is a religious pilgrimage. I am sure that there are some folks who would say that it is. Everyone wears the school's colors. Flags are flown from truck beds and car windows. Restaurants and stores decorate their plate glass windows with lyrics from the fight song and demeaning pictures or rhymes about the opposing team's mascot. The home team's mascot is found on everything, from t-shirts, hats, and mugs to baked goods, temporary tattoos, and permanent tattoos. Local churches have changed their marquees to promote the game. One local church even hyped the game so much that they created their own highlight video to play in the background while their band performed Phil Collins' *In the Air Tonight*. With all of the pomp and circumstance associated with game days, a lot can be missed.

One such game day, late in the season, I spent the day unable to accomplish much of my work because of the nervous excitement present in the city. It was infectious. I probably read more football articles on ESPN.com on that one day than I had read all season. The city was alive with anticipation. Twitter told me that the game was trending. Local schools got in on the action, too. Their fences were covered in student-made banners declaring their love for the team and wishing them luck. Around noon, a slow

and lazy rain settled over the city. This did little if anything to the mood. It just seemed to make the atmosphere more epic. Around 5 o'clock in the afternoon I made my way to the pizza place to pick up four pies—two cheese, two pepperoni—before heading to visit with AJ and his family. I knew that AJ loves sports and suspected that he would want to talk about the game at length. Because of this, I did not have a whole lot planned for our meeting. We would just chat and eat pizza while his siblings ran around and caused a ruckus. I pulled into the parking lot and drove past some folks smoking cigarettes in the rain. They gave me a knowing nod and spoke aloud their allegiance to the home team. I chuckled and responded through the car window.

As I approached AJ's grandmother's door I thought that it seemed too quiet in the house. Usually, I am greeted by a chorus of little voices who scream when they hear my three-rap knock on the door, but today all I am greeted by is silence. I allowed 30 seconds to pass for fear of being rude and knocking again too soon. With the second series of knocks I used a little more force and AJ's grandmother appeared after a few more seconds. "Hi, Matt. Dora isn't here. She is back at the shelter cleaning out her room." A cool panic washed over me because I had been waiting for a day when the family would need to move again. It had to be bad. I had a multitude of questions prepared for just such an occasion: Why is she cleaning out her room? Where is she going to go? What about the kids? Did something happen with her job? Is she ok? Does she need help? Not once did I think about what AJ's grandmother was about to say.

"They are moving into an apartment and she wants to make sure all of their stuff is taken care of and ready to go. AJ is here. Let me get him for you." The audible sigh of relief and release of tension from my shoulders led into a smile breaking across my face.

I walked into the living room and put the pizza boxes on the table. Then, AJ bounded down the stairs with a look on his face that I can only describe as absolute joy. “We’re getting an apartment!” He declared. “We are moving out of the shelter and into an apartment!”

It hit me while I was driving home. Kick-off was in about an hour and a half but there had already been a victory. It may not take place in a stadium with 100,000 people cheering and celebrating but that does not limit its impact. The ripples of AJ and his family moving out of the shelter and into an apartment seem small at the moment but they will grow into waves that the family can use to their advantage.

Summary of the Study

This dissertation, as described in its beginning pages, is a story about a young adolescent named AJ. When AJ and I first met, he and his four younger siblings and single mother lived in a shelter for families experiencing homelessness. By nature of living in the shelter, AJ meets one of the criteria outlined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 (MV, 2015), which defines *homeless* as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” (§ 725). Although the stories, identity artifacts, and findings shared are AJ’s, he is just one of the nearly 700 students in North Fork School District who were identified as homeless during the 2014-2015 school year, the most recent year for which data are available. The purpose of this single participant qualitative case study was to document the lived experiences and funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2012) of a young adolescent experiencing homelessness from a small city in the southeastern United States. The voices of young adolescents experiencing homelessness, and young adolescents from

marginalized perspectives at large, are largely underrepresented within the pages of middle level education research. To begin to remedy that, this project was guided by two research questions:

1. What funds of identity do students experiencing homelessness possess?
2. How are these funds of identity supported, if at all, by school structures and personnel?

After receiving approval from my institution's human subjects research office, I began the formidable process of participant recruitment through multiple organizations including North Fork School District and five different social service agencies. In spite of a plethora of recruitment locations, AJ was the only potential participant who decided to move forward with the research.

AJ is an 11-year-old 5th grader and has already been enrolled in seven different elementary schools in NFSD. His transience is just one byproduct of a school career hampered by homelessness. At the time of the study AJ, his mother, and four younger siblings resided in a local homeless shelter for families. Over AJ's short academic career, he has fit the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 (MV, 2015) definition of homelessness in multiple ways. In addition to his time spent in the family shelter, he has also lived in emergency shelters, hotels and motels, and houses or apartments with extended family members in doubled-up scenarios. He rarely misses a day of school and refers to his current school as a place that supports him and his two younger school-aged siblings.

We continue to see each other. Our varied interactions (e.g., meals, texts, phone calls, etc.) yielded several different forms of data including audio recordings of the

conversations that were later transcribed, field notes, and identity artifacts that AJ created himself including maps—of the room he and his family shared at the shelter and his school—and a significant circle. After he created each identity artifact, AJ described the significance of each portion to me and answered follow-up questions.

The data gathered in this project were analyzed using Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral. The data were collected and organized into different password protected Google Drive folders that were only accessible to me and my doctoral committee chair/faculty principal investigator, Dr. Gayle Andrews. I then holistically read through the transcripts and field notes while listening to the audio recordings and took notes on emerging ideas. These emerging ideas were then described and classified into themes that, in turn, were developed into interpretations of AJ's experiences. At this point I approached AJ with my beginning understandings and interpretations to perform a sort of member check about the funds of identity that were taking shape across the data. With his approval, I then proceeded to craft an account of the findings. A summary of those findings appears below.

Discussion of Findings from Research Question One

The first research question that guided this inquiry was *What funds of identity do students experiencing homelessness possess?* The funds of identity that AJ and I documented, uncovered, and discussed cannot be seen as a complete picture of who he is as a student, young adolescent, and individual who meets the MV definition of experiencing homelessness. What we unearthed is just a snapshot of his life, framed by the time we spent together and his current experiences as a fifth grader at a NFSD school. Esteban-Guitart (2012) describes funds of identity as belonging to one or more of five

different types. These five types are geographical, practical, cultural, social, and institutional. Geographical funds of identity include places, locations, or structures that “become a source of self-identification” (Esteban-Guitart, 2012, p. 177). Practical funds of identity include activities that a person participates in like writing or being an accountant. Cultural funds of identity include religious symbols or flags. Social funds of identity include significant others or friend groups. Institutional funds of identity are associated with social institutions like marriage, family, or religious belief systems.

AJ has numerous funds of identity and by definition those funds of identity will continue to emerge and evolve across his lifetime. Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014a) state that “understanding identity requires an understanding of the funds of practices, beliefs, knowledge, and ideas that people make use of” (p. 31). Through the creation of identity artifacts including maps and significant circles and their accompanying conversations, AJ and I uncovered four funds of identity: his friendships, his family, AJ’s identity as a creator, and the label of “homeless” that has been applied to him.

Every conversation that we had included a reference to friends, time spent together, or a desire to chat with them. For example, AJ brought up his friends multiple times in the conversation that followed the creation of his significant circle. In response to how he spends his time in the evenings, he said

Like yeah, we all got Instagram. And we all be on Instagram and I'll make a chat and join and invite all my friends and we'll all just be chatting.

His friends were also involved in his decorating plans for his future room:

Yeah, but [my friends] don't really come to my house. Only at school. But when we get an apartment, I hope my friends come over.

AJ's friendships, and the act of being a friend, are social in nature. Esteban-Guitart (2012) argues that funds of identity, the tools and instruments used to form identities, "are transmitted — and internalized — through social interaction and participation in contexts of life and activity" (p. 178). AJ's identity is shaped by his friendships and he hopes for opportunities for that identity to be further influenced through social interaction in spaces that he calls his own.

AJ's friendships are spread across the seven different NFSD elementary schools that he has attended. Friends have been found to be a great resource for youth experiencing homelessness. Bender, Yang, Ferguson, and Thompson (2015) found that 58% of youth experiencing homelessness depended on friendships for income assistance. AJ's friendships are some of the most consistent and persistent aspects of his life because of his ability to keep in touch via social media. He told me that his phone is the reason he is able to stay in contact:

As long as, like, I still talk to them or something... Like, [they] my friends, you know?

Hallett (2012) described the social networks of students experiencing homelessness as different from their housed peers. The lack of continued and sustained engagement with specific friend groups and teachers can lead to a lack of engagement in school (Decter, 2007). This does not seem to be the case for AJ. The social fund of identity, *friends*, is something that he holds sacred. When his family was moved from a larger room in the shelter to an even smaller space that they needed to share, AJ saw it as an opportunity.

Everybody else went mad. I was so happy. I started moving this stuff fast because I don't get to talk to my friends at night time if I was in my bedroom because I didn't have Wi-Fi. Now I do.

Even his personal comfort (and his family's) can be put on hold if it means that he gets to connect with friends. AJ's friendships in and across schools, coupled with the strong focus on support from school faculty like Ms. Johns and Ms. Pine, have promoted a deep engagement with school.

AJ has 11 younger brothers and sisters. He currently resides with four of them and another seven siblings live with his father. (Refer to Figure 4.6 for a visual depiction of AJ's family constellation.) Even though these relationships are spread out across 100 miles, AJ views the influence of his family as one of the most important aspects of his life. His family members can be found on his significant circle (Figure 4.5) with siblings closer to the center of the circle than his parents. Hallett (2012) describes the work of parents experiencing homelessness in doubled-up residences as being filled with negotiations. Parents from multiple households must broker responsibilities in order to ensure that every child's needs are met (Hallett, 2012). AJ's mother, Dora, recognized the impact that education plays in the lives of her children. For example, Dora made sure that each of her children was enrolled in a preschool program. Taylor, Gibson, and Hurd (2015) found that a majority of parents experiencing homelessness "were adamant in seeking preschool enrollment for their children despite the numerous challenges and barriers they faced" (p. 74). Dora approached the challenges of finding a stable residence, maintaining employment, and lacking personal transportation with gusto. AJ's identity

development is influenced by the support and care provided by Dora and other family members.

Aside from including his brothers, sisters, father, and mother on his significant circle, AJ mentioned his family during many of our conversations. During our initial meeting AJ talked about when he gets to spend time with his grandmother and aunts. He shared:

I hang out with my grandma every day. Because every time we get out from school, the bus stops right here and drops us off.

AJ's identity is outwardly influenced by the close proximity to his three aunts and grandmother. Their influence, care, and support supplement Dora's. He may not realize it or completely understand why, but AJ will be better off than other students experiencing homelessness because of his extended support network. Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014a) shared, "Learning takes place when participants, supported and guided by others, are involved in activities that enact connections between prior knowledge and experiences and new information" (p. 44). The more individuals that AJ has to support and guide him, the more he will learn.

Benson and Johnson (2010) also found that adolescent experiences with family structures can influence identity development. Specifically, Benson and Johnson found that adolescents from high-conflict family units are more likely to "prematurely detach from their parental figures in [an] attempt to separate themselves from a negative family context" (p. 1263). This detachment influences an early adult identity formation and could result in taking part in age-inappropriate behaviors. As a young adolescent experiencing homelessness, AJ is already at risk of engaging in such behaviors

(Obradović et al., 2009). If AJ continues to connect with and source a fund of identity from his family, he may stave off some of the risks associated with youth homelessness.

Identifying as a creator helps AJ cope with homelessness from numerous perspectives. Identifying as a creator, in AJ's case, is a practical fund of identity. AJ creates music, videos, art, and pictures, and he choreographs dance.

Matt: *You use your phone to get in touch with friends? You use your phone to get in touch with your cousins and your family and your dad? You use your phone to make your YouTube videos? You use your phone to take your Instagram pictures?*

AJ: *Yeah, Instagram video. Dance videos and other apps. Yeah. Music's fun, because I wanna make a few songs when I grow up and sometimes that help me like, play types of instruments.*

Making music helps him stay connected with his father. He told me:

Sports is not going to be my career. Rapping is. My dad...is a rapper.

In addition to staying connected with his father, AJ's videos, pictures, and dances are produced on his phone and published on YouTube and Instagram to share with his friends. Each of these activities promotes relationships. AJ's videos and pictures are tools that he uses to digitally connect with an audience of friends and family members outside of the shelter. The music he creates, including the raps he writes, are presented for friends in person at school.

[During recess] We can't do nothing on [our phones], though because there are no hotspots, so we just take pictures and listen to music.

Each of his creative activities could also be leveraged within classroom spaces. Hilton and Hilton (2013) presented two case studies that focused on incorporating digital technologies in science classrooms. One of the two case studies described the benefits of creating videos to explain topics. Participants in the study described video production as “an aid to their learning, memory, and thinking” (p. 156). Additionally, the collaborative nature of the projects allowed for students to develop teamwork skills while accomplishing learning goals.

Joves and colleagues (2015) described the opportunities presented by incorporating students’ funds of identity in academic curriculum.

In this sense, the production and exchange of students and their families' activities become strategic resources for the development of generative knowledge. As we have seen, this entails ethnographically understanding the students and their families to transform classroom practice.... The teacher starts from the information obtained from the family and the student interviewed (everyday knowledge) and through this knowledge designs a teaching unit to facilitate the understanding of academic knowledge. (p. 76)

AJ’s *creator* fund of identity could be utilized by his teachers to promote engagement in classes. For example, rapping, photography, and video making could all be used in social studies classes while reviewing concepts related to the Civil War and its influence on the south.

Although he does not self-disclose his identity as experiencing homelessness to teachers, friends, or acquaintances, AJ’s interactions are shaped by his lack of stable housing. AJ lives in a family shelter with his mother and four younger siblings and thus

his situation fulfills MV's definition of experiencing homelessness. He does not reveal this aspect of his identity to his friends out of fear of how the dominant narratives surrounding homelessness could influence the way his friends interact with him. Tierney and Hallett (2010) describe the shame associated with homelessness as impacting relationships while "encourag[ing] them to be silent and remain invisible" (p. 22). This shame may result in a "fragile sense of dignity" for youth and necessitate "ample amounts of respect and empathy when sharing parts of their lives that have been the source of ridicule" (p. 24). Ellis and Geller (2016) also described the shame associated with youth homelessness as being associated with the imperative to educate teachers about the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

One of the main issues associated with the label of "homeless" as a fund of identity is that "key systems have neither recognized or understood what was important to [youth experiencing homelessness]" (Ellis & Geller, 2016, p. 603). The key systems that Ellis and Geller allude to are some of the curators of the dominant narratives surrounding homelessness. Popular culture has trained society to view poverty and homelessness as something to be ashamed of and pitied (Pimpare, 2017a). State departments of education, like Georgia's (referenced in chapter two), conduct research on the effectiveness of school-based measures at alleviating the sting of homelessness (GADOE, 2016). They are a key system that has yet to recognize the importance of incorporating youth voices in their data reports on homelessness.

The four funds of identity that AJ and I discussed are shared among three types: social, practical, and institutional. His family and friendships simultaneously represent significant others/friend groups and social institutions. Thus, family and friendships fit

within both social and institutional funds of identity. Being a creator falls within both the practical and social funds of identity. AJ creates multiple forms of art that hold great personal significance and help to mediate his friendships via social media (e.g. his meticulously curated Instagram account). The label of “homeless,” a fund of identity inscribed upon AJ and his siblings, is an institutional fund and impacts AJ’s interactions whether or not he self-identifies as experiencing homelessness or not.

Across his funds of identity, AJ utilizes his personal cell phone to support—or, in the case of *homeless*, to distract away from—each of his four identified funds of identity in some form or fashion. His phone is not connected to a cellular network and only connects to the internet when connected to Wi-Fi, but that does not stop AJ from squeezing every ounce of potential out of the phone and leveraging it for his benefit. With respect to his friends, AJ uses his phone to access and post on social and participatory media (e.g., Instagram and YouTube). He chats with his friends via the same social media apps and calls them using calling apps. While with his friends at school he uses his phone to play music. Without the phone his communication with friends would be limited to interactions at school.

The phone also influences his interactions with family:

I get on Instagram and talk to my cousins and my friends and stuff.

In addition to the ways AJ interacts with his friends via a web connection and his phone, he shares his phone with younger siblings so that they can watch videos and play games together. He keeps in touch with his father, other siblings, and cousins who do not live in the North Fork area using the same social media, chat, and phone calling apps.

The phone is also AJ's primary tool for creating. The pictures and videos he posts on Instagram and YouTube are taken with his phone. He uses the phone's note-taking app and music player to write raps and then recite them over beats. The image that he has cultivated on Instagram could also be viewed as one of AJ's greatest creations. Were one to stumble upon AJ's Instagram account or YouTube channel, it would be a far reach for anyone to classify him as experiencing homelessness according to dominant societal narratives about homelessness.

Dominant narratives surrounding homelessness impact how AJ moves throughout the world.

Matt: *Do you wish that other teachers knew that you live there? I mean now that you could be moving out, like hopefully...*

AJ: *Still don't know.*

Matt: *No? Do you mind me asking why?*

AJ: *Because like my mom told me not to tell no ... Like we're not supposed to tell nobody...and like I don't want to tell them anyway.*

Sulkowski (2016) stated that the dominant narratives surrounding homelessness and the stigma it carries often “prevents students from self-identifying with the label of ‘homeless,’ and it prevents them from receiving services from school psychologists, homeless liaisons, attendance officers, nurses, social workers, counselors, and others who can help support their academic and life success” (p. 768). Discomfort with revealing his experiences as a young adolescent identified as homeless is lessened by the ways that he utilizes his phone. The phone serves as an intermediary with friends and serves as a status symbol or entry point of sorts with stably housed peers. His Instagram profile is

cultivated in a way that presents AJ as not experiencing housing insecurity and gives the perception of housing stability.

The ways that AJ uses his phone to facilitate further development of his funds of identity are not uncommon among young adolescents. The rate at which he uses technology places him within the 38% of youth aged 8-12 who use devices to watch video more than four hours a day (Rideout, 2015). In a dissertation study of middle school boys' technology use at school and home, Carroll (2013) found possibilities for literacy development even though the technologies were used in each location differently. Carroll called for collaboration between caregivers and educators to find ways to close the gap between how participants used technology for activities like gaming and how they use it in classes. Carroll describes the need for teachers to provide opportunities for multimodal texts to further engage students' interests. The University of Florida Literacy Initiative (UFLI) utilizes touch screen tablets and video recording—two skills at which AJ is adept—to engage students in learning (Lane, Pullen, Hudson, & Konold, 2009). Results showed that the digital tools used were effective at increasing knowledge and skills like phonemic awareness, print awareness, decoding, fluency, and comprehension. However, programs like UFLI are not the norm. Only 22% (8 of 37) of the digital literacy programs that Cook (2016) analyzed were rated at a strong level. Nearly one-third of the programs lacked evidence as to whether or not their initiatives were effective.

AJ's phone occupies the coveted middle of his significant circle (Figure 4.5). He uses his phone to stay in touch with friends and family. For example, his Instagram account acts as a means of staying in contact with both friends and family when he is not near them:

We all be on Instagram and I'll make a chat and join and invite all my friends and we'll all just be chatting.

According to AJ, if he were given the option to stay up all night chatting with his friends on Instagram and other chat apps, he would. The content that AJ accesses on the phone is used as a sort of cultural currency with family and friends as well. AJ's father lives roughly 100 miles away in a different city with an entire other family of his own. Even across miles, AJ speaks very fondly of his father and wishes to be just like him when he grows up. They often talk about rap videos they watch and specific musicians. Without the phone, AJ might not be able to access this content and make these types of connections.

Table 5.1
How AJ's Phone Influences Documented Funds of Identity

AJ's Funds of Identity	How AJ's Phone Influences the Fund of Identity
Friends	Access social media, participatory media, chat, and calling apps to communicate with friends. Plays music for friends during breaks in the school day for friends to enjoy.
Family	Access social media, participatory media, chat, and calling apps to communicate with father and cousins he does not see regularly. Plays games with his younger siblings.
Creator	Takes and posts pictures on Instagram. Captures and posts video to YouTube. Uses note taking apps to write rap lyrics. Uses voice recording apps to record himself rapping.
Homeless	Phone is used a status symbol or entry in to friendships with stably housed peers. Instagram profile is cultivated in a way that presents AJ as not experiencing housing insecurity. Phone gives the perception of financial stability. AJ's skillful utilization bypasses the need for a cellular connection.

AJ is a young adolescent who meets the federal government's definition of experiencing homelessness. Dominant societal narratives have painted homelessness in a hue that renders those experiencing it as one-dimensional. Dominant societal narratives, perpetuated by popular culture, the media, and anecdotal narratives depict individuals experiencing homelessness as dirty, drug addicted, and dangerous (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001; Phelan, Link, Moore, & Stueve, 1997; Pimpare, 2017a; Toolis & Hammack, 2015). AJ is by no means one-dimensional as dominant narratives suggest. His funds of identity demonstrate that.

Discussion of Findings from Research Question Two

The second research question that guided this inquiry was *Are these funds of identity supported, if at all, by school structures and personnel?* AJ's identity artifacts, the conversations we had, and my field notes describe a young adolescent who is simultaneously supported and hindered by school structures and personnel. AJ feels that all of his teachers and the school's staff members are supportive.

Matt: *Do you feel like your homeroom teacher ...*

AJ: *Will say something?*

Matt: *Is a supportive? Like helpful? Do you feel like you get help from her?*

AJ: *I get help from all my teachers, yeah. Teachers help out at school. All the students.*

That said, two individuals whom AJ brought up in conversation on multiple occasions showed me how his *student experiencing homelessness* fund of identity is supported in and out of school spaces. The first is AJ's homeroom teacher, Ms. Johns. She is a disciplinarian who personifies being a warm demander (Bondy & Ross, 2008). She has

presented herself to AJ as someone whom he can trust who will not share his issues with housing instability. She expects attentiveness from her students and is not above “*being nosey*” and watching her students’ computer screens. At the same time, she recognizes that AJ needs freedom and opportunities to establish his identity outside the confines of the label *homeless*. Ali, ullah, Kashif, and Khan (2015) speak to the influence of teachers across a lifetime. In a study of factors contributing to empathetic instruction by secondary school teachers in Pakistan, Ali and colleagues found that empathetic teaching has advantages for students and educators, and they argued that it should be coached throughout teacher education programs and in-service opportunities. Ms. Johns’ identity as an empathetic, warm demander demonstrates how she is more than just a content teacher. Her efforts to provide a stable and beneficial learning environment for AJ are reminiscent of whole child programs (e.g., Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development [ASCD], 2014; Making Caring Common Project, 2014). ASCD’s (2014) *Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child* initiative recognizes the need for “collaboration between health and education to improve each child’s cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development” (p. 7). Ms. Johns provides an environment that is safe in physical, emotional, and social ways. Her efforts should be emulated by other educators who work with young adolescents experiencing homelessness.

A second caring adult with whom AJ has a strong relationship is the school’s counselor, Ms. Pine. Ms. Pine goes beyond her job description as a school counselor and provides support and assistance not only for AJ, but his entire family. She made sure that transportation was available for AJ and his two younger school-aged siblings. The vignette at the beginning of this chapter, chronicling AJ’s excitement over moving into an

apartment, was partly made possible by Ms. Pine. I was silent for a moment during that conversation. I snapped out of it and said:

Matt: *Yeah (thinking about their apartment). How was school today?*

AJ: *Good. (He started to grin and chuckled. Poking fun at me) You look funny.*

Matt: *Man, I can't help that. So...I forgot her name.*

AJ: *Ms. Pine.*

Matt: *Yeah, so Ms. Pine ...*

AJ: *She paid!*

Matt: *She got money together and...*

AJ: *I don't know how it worked, but, yeah!*

When Ms. Pine heard about the roadblock to Dora finalizing a lease for an apartment, she gathered the funds for the required deposit and organized transportation to the housing office (personal correspondence, AJ's grandmother). Aside from these very physical needs being met by Ms. Pine, AJ's eyes begin to sparkle at the mention of her name. I do not know if he has had similar relationships with the counselors at the six other schools he has attended but I am glad that he is now attending one that employs Ms. Pine. This seems to beg the question about the importance of counselors, including perhaps the empathetic role they can play as brokers between kids and access to services, and thus, challenging dominant narratives surrounding homelessness. Tomlinson and Murphy (2018) describe the benefits of empathy that manifest over the course of a person's life.

Human beings are born with the capacity for kindness and compassion; however, that capacity has to be nurtured to be fully realized. People in whom it is nurtured are better equipped to live meaningful and productive lives. Empathy is a link

between self and others—a channel for experiencing and expressing kindness and compassion. Working together as teachers, leaders, and students to build an environment that embodies compassion and empathy stretches all of us. It extends our possibilities. It satisfies a profoundly fundamental need. (p. 26)

Ms. Pine embodies empathy and she does her part to infuse AJ's entire school with it as well.

Implications

What AJ and I uncovered about his funds of identity has the potential to inform research and practice with respect to students experiencing homelessness. Despite experiencing homelessness, AJ's story is hopeful and has implications for teaching, policy, and research with respect to students experiencing homelessness. This section discusses implications for AJ as he continues his educational journey; for school faculty and staff as they seek to support other students experiencing homelessness; for local, state, and federal policy with respect to young adolescents experiencing homelessness; and for researchers moving forward using funds of identity or working with young adolescents experiencing homelessness.

Implications for AJ and Young Adolescents

First and foremost, AJ's funds of identity as a friend, family member, creator, and homeless have implications for his life. Research tells us that youth experiencing homelessness are more likely to disengage from academics and eventually drop out of school (Biggar, 2001). AJ emphasizes friendships in school spaces, connecting with those school friends outside of school spaces, and the excitement he feels for being reunited with friends in future school spaces. This emphasis bodes well for future engagement

across grade levels. AJ's identity artifacts and their accompanying conversations are data that show a young adolescent who may not have learning as his ultimate goal but one who looks forward to the engagement through relationships that accompanies school.

AJ pulls great support from his friends in person and via the internet. Despite the stresses put on friendships due to his transience, AJ has been able to cultivate and sustain friendships across distances:

As long as, like, I still talk to them or something... Like, [they] my friends, you know?

Doda (2013) described the academic perils that present themselves when positive relationships are absent from classroom spaces. AJ has shown that he values positive relationships with both friends and teachers and utilizes what he can in order to promote them. The hard times are likely not over but the coping skills he has developed at eleven years old will be beneficial in years to come.

Job opportunities for youth experiencing homelessness are low and the possibility of exposure to violence and anger issues is prevalent (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Karabanow, Hughes, Ticknor, Kidd, & Patterson, 2010; Kennedy, 2007; Stronge & Reed-Victor, 2000). That being said, with the deck stacked against him, AJ has reason for hope. AJ has a support network around him of caring adults (listed in Figure 5.1). This network includes blood relations as well as NFSD personnel. His maternal family supports consist of his mother, grandmother, and three aunts. His paternal family supports consist of his father and his family who AJ only mentioned in passing in reference to finding Wi-Fi connections:

Matt: Where else do you get on Wi-Fi?

AJ: Here. The shelter. McDonalds. It's like my grandma's house in Metropolis too, and my aunties' house in Metropolis.

AJ's support network at school includes the school's counselor, Ms. Pine; AJ's homeroom teacher, Ms. Johns; and NFSD's homeless liaison, Ms. Marie. Networks of caring adults have been shown to be of vital importance for young adolescents and those experiencing homelessness (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Ellis & Geller, 2016; Hallett, 2011; NMSA, 2010). AJ lives with his mother and will hopefully soon be neighbors with his grandmother and three adult aunts. This close proximity to familial support will undoubtedly pay dividends for him as he continues to progress through school.

AJ's support network of caring adults mentioned in interviews

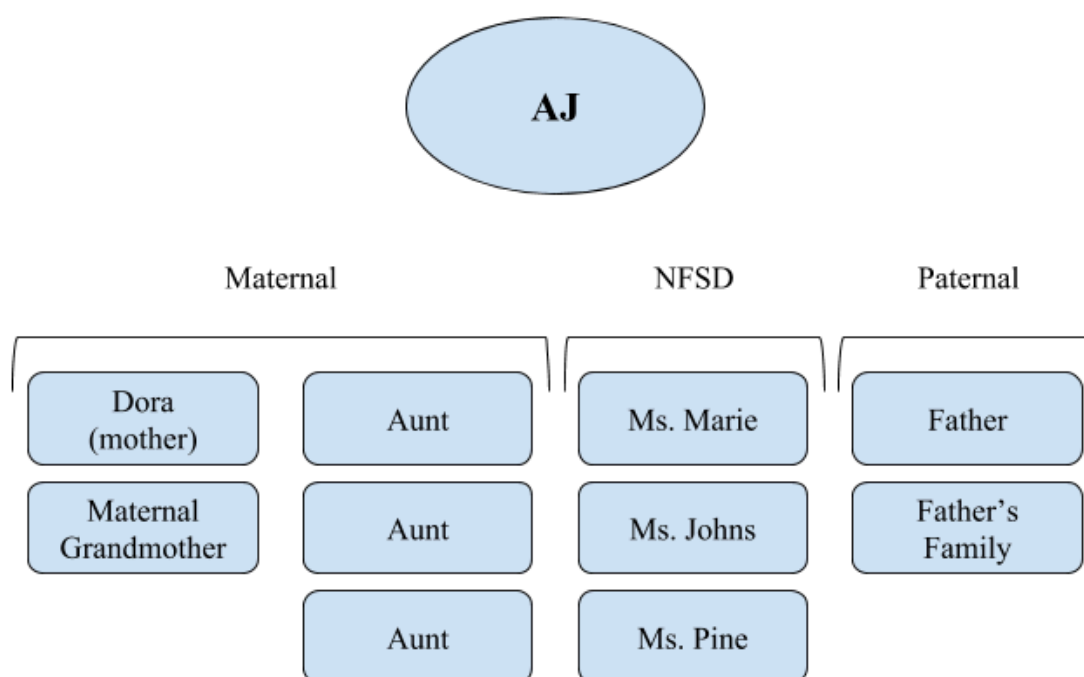


Figure 5.1. AJ's support network of caring adults mentioned in interviews.

AJ hopes to use his identity as a creator to its maximum advantage. He hopes to become a rapper and believes that having a YouTube video reach 100,000 views or having an “official” Instagram account would qualify him as having “made it.”

AJ: *I know. I only got five posts, and 1,000 followers. I'm gonna end up getting the check mark. You know what that is?*

Matt: *Yeah, the official account over there?*

AJ: *Yeah, that means you famous.*

Though this belief may not necessarily be accurate, it has motivated AJ to practice many of the requisite skills needed to accomplish such a task. He uses his phone to make and watch videos, take pictures, and look up lyrics. He writes raps and records them using his phone. Only time will tell if AJ is able to accomplish his dream of becoming a rapper. Until then he will continue to develop skills and an identity in line with his ambitions online and in web-connected spaces.

Hopefully AJ will not need the services provided to students experiencing homelessness for much longer. If his family’s pursuit of housing stability is successful, perhaps the label of “homeless” will fall off with his transition to middle school. It is doubtful that homelessness will ever cease to impact AJ’s lived experiences. He and the more than 1.3 million other students identified as experiencing homelessness will always carry those experiences with them.

Young adolescents, regardless of their housing status, will always carry with them a creativity or savviness. AJ has found innovative ways to navigate his *homeless* fund of identity. Dominant narratives say that he should not be able to interact in the innovative ways he does. The dominant narrative would argue that *homelessness should be pitied*

and individuals should feel shame (Hallett, 2012; Kim, 2013; Toolis & Hammack, 2015). AJ **still** finds spaces and opportunities to perform himself in housed and non-homeless ways. This is part of the reason why youth-engaged work like this study is necessary with and for young adolescents. There is power and possibility within young adolescents that has been ignored or stifled (Andrews, 2011, 2013; Lesko, 1996; Lesko & Mitschele, 2013). This also demonstrates why Esteban-Guitart (2012) calls them *funds* of identity. Individuals make contributions to them. AJ stores up these funds of identity; he actively puts them on (or takes them off), actively hangs them on his wall, displays them with pride. When necessary, he makes withdrawals from these funds and uses them for *his* own purposes. As *he* sees fit.

It needs to be stated that the implications discussed in this section for AJ and other young adolescents experiencing homelessness will undoubtedly also impact the experiences of other students with *a rising tide lifts all boats* sort of metaphor. Roy (2015) describes how environments could be designed with disabilities in mind and how that would benefit all individuals who interact within said environment. Similarly, Universal Design for Learning (UDL) (Center for Applied Special Technology, 2018) calls for educators to design environments so that “all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities” (para. 2). UDL tasks educators with providing multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression with a goal of developing expert learners who are purposeful and motivated, resourceful and knowledgeable, and strategic and goal driven. Initiatives like Wi-Fi on every bus and support networks of caring adults would benefit all learners regardless of their housing stability or instability.

Implications for School Faculty and Staff

This research study revealed four of AJ's funds of identity: friends, family, creator, and homeless. These four funds of identity should not be viewed as an exhaustive list but as a snapshot for AJ in his current context, a selfie of sorts. Selfies are not intended to capture the entirety of a person's life or the complete essence of their being. Instead, they are brief and only depict what the creator desires. Each of AJ's four funds are influenced in some way by the adult advocates with whom he interacts in school.

Adult advocates are of paramount importance for young adolescents. The Association for Middle Level Education's 16 "Characteristics of Successful Schools for Young Adolescents" from *This We Believe* (NMSA, 2010) make reference to the importance of caring adults in multiple places. The document states that middle grades classrooms must be staffed with individuals "who choose to work with and advocate for young adolescents" (p. 15). Education stakeholders must collaborate with young adolescents to inform a relevant curriculum. Educators must be in constant dialogue with students, aware of their interests and hopes so that "teaching approaches capitalize on skills, abilities, and prior knowledge" (p. 22). Middle level educators should keep abreast of the latest research, policy, and popular culture that impact young adolescents. *This We Believe* (NMSA, 2010) also calls on adult advocates to consider their own interpersonal relationships with each other because "the school itself is a teacher and ... students learn not only from the instruction offered but from implicit lessons as well" (p. 30). Probably the most explicit mention comes with the twelfth essential characteristic, which states

“Every student’s academic and personal development is guided by an adult advocate” (p. 35).

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 (MV, 2015), in much less flowery language, calls for similar supports for students experiencing homelessness. Neither of these guiding texts should be viewed as superior over the other but they must be employed in concert by school faculty and staff to address the needs of young adolescents experiencing homelessness.

If AJ is able to accomplish what he already has with two documented school-based adult advocates, imagine what could be accomplished if those numbers were doubled or tripled. Imagine still that his days were filled with adult advocates who were warm demanders like Ms. Johns. What if Ms. Pine was not alone in her efforts to meet the needs of AJ and his family? Schools can take steps towards making this a reality by providing opportunities to educate their faculty and staff about homelessness, its prevalence in the district, and high-impact practices to benefit students experiencing homelessness. This could also include the creation of student support teams who are specifically trained in and compassionate about working with students experiencing homelessness (Sulkowski & Joyce-Beaulieu, 2014). These support teams should not be made up entirely of counselors and social workers but also include teachers and community members who, similarly to those described in TWB (NMSA, 2010), intentionally choose to work with young adolescents experiencing homelessness. Ziomek-Daigle and Andrews (2009) describe similar support teams in place in middle grades schools in Georgia to prevent students from dropping out. These “graduation coaches” brought together teams of stakeholders including educators, family/caregivers,

and community members to support students at-risk of dropping out and these teams of stakeholders experienced great success in supporting students. Sadly, graduation coach programs were largely defunded by the state in 2010 and those graduation coaches who remain are relatively absent from middle grades schools (Dalton, 2015).

Deficit perspectives abound when discussing students experiencing poverty.

Gorski (2011) describes the damages resulting from such mindsets.

Deficit ideology is a worldview that explains and justifies outcome inequalities—standardized test scores or levels of educational attainment, for example—by pointing to supposed deficiencies within disenfranchised individuals and communities. Simultaneously, and of equal importance, deficit ideology discounts sociopolitical context, such as the systemic conditions (racism, economic injustice, and so on) that grant some people greater social, political, and economic access, such as that to high-quality schooling, than others. (p. 153)

One major way that this plays out in classrooms is through the curriculum that is enacted. AJ's funds of identity relay a young adolescent who is passionate about creating and willing to take risks in the process. He is skilled at using digital technologies to accomplish his personal goals and is able to accomplish much more than his teachers ask of him using the personal learning devices (PLDs) provided by the school. Greenhow, Robelia, and Hughes (2009) make similar observations of the students in their work who "believe the integration of these technologies would be beneficial in schools; however, there is a 'digital disconnect' and instruction isn't responding to the way students are using these technologies" (p. 247). AJ is already proficient in using Web 2.0 tools, which Greenhow and colleagues define as "features [that] allow learners to link up, create,

consume, and share independently produced information, media, and applications on a global scale” (p. 249). A teacher’s incorporation of more Web 2.0 opportunities would not only benefit students experiencing homelessness, but all students regardless of their housing situation. It could accomplish curriculum that is “relevant to the concerns of young adolescents and based on how students learn best” and incorporate “instructional methods designed to prepare all students to achieve high standards and become lifelong learners” (Jackson & Davis, 2000, p. 23). This dissertation study points to potential locations of increased student engagement that would ultimately help to better support students experiencing homelessness, including, for example, a commitment to incorporating digital tools and literacies in classroom activities; forming student support teams that include educators, family, and community members; organizing school structures into teams; and amending transportation practices to limit isolation in transit.

As a post-script of sorts, the PLD program in NFSD is in the process of being phased out. Some schools, like Riverside Middle (Kyrie’s school from the pilot study) has decided that students are no longer allowed to bring the devices home in the evening. This move essentially negates the family access benefit of PLDs. Some schools will continue to use the devices but not repair them when broken or lost (personal communication, NFSD stakeholder). This has implications for families and students who do not have access to personal computers of their own. The wealth of information available via personal computer and Wi-Fi connection allows for not only a connection with services and opportunities, but also the normalcy of a life connected.

Implications for Policy

One of the dominant narratives surrounding homelessness is that of criminality (Pimpare, 2017a; Toolis & Hammack, 2015). Some of this stigmatization is fueled by government policies that demonize homelessness and present it as dangerous, such as “defensive architecture” (Andreou, 2015, para. 1), when environments are intentionally made physically uncomfortable (e.g., arm rests in between seats on benches). AJ’s experiences and funds of identity challenge dominant narratives surrounding homelessness. Much of how AJ is positioned in school is determined by policy level conversations to which he has not been granted access. This study illuminated openings for policy changes that could promote for students experiencing homelessness “equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, ... as provided to other children and youths” (MV, 2015, § 721). Implications exist for policy at the school, district, state, and national levels.

School policy. Student support teams (SSTs), analogous to those mentioned above, should become school policy when working with students experiencing homelessness, a call echoed by Miller and colleagues (2015). Currently the state of Georgia utilizes SSTs as a “a joint effort of regular education and special education to identify and plan alternative instructional strategies for children prior to or in lieu of a special education referral” (GADOE, 2011, p. 4). The Georgia Department of Education suggests that each SST include a minimum of three individuals who could include an administrator, at least one of the student’s teachers, a special education teacher, a counselor, a school psychologist, a special education resource person, a school social worker, and a caregiver. These teams enact a six-step process to address students’ needs:

- (1) identification of needs;
- (2) assessment, if necessary;
- (3) educational plan;
- (4) implementation;
- (5) follow-up and support; and
- (6) continuous monitoring and evaluation.

SSTs were originally designed “to prevent inappropriate referrals to Special Education” (GADOE, 2011, p. 5). Notice that the intent was not to support students but to limit referrals for special education services. The type of support team that I envision is one whose purpose is to alleviate the burdens of homelessness for young adolescents.

Training a support team (or multiple teams) would ensure that students experiencing homelessness, with their myriad and specific educational needs, have a team looking out for them on a daily basis. A support team such as this would be similar to what students who qualify for special education services receive, i.e., individualized education plans (IEP) or 504 plans. IEPs are legally binding documents that are tailored to the specific learning needs of students receiving special education services (Office of Civil Rights [OCR], 2015). 504 plans are similar but are intended to ensure accommodations are in place to promote the success of students with identified disabilities (OCR, 2015). A move to implement individualized learning plans echoes the rationale for a single participant research study. Each student experiencing homelessness has specific needs that must be identified and addressed. A student support team could accomplish that task.

Student support teams are not currently mandatory for all students experiencing homelessness. Sulkowski and Joyce-Beaulieu (2014) stress the importance of developing

efficient student support teams for students experiencing homelessness who also qualify for special education services under 504 plans. They also call for members of student support teams to “eschew assuming a gatekeeper role for service delivery and instead focus more intently on the unique circumstances displayed by each homeless student they encounter” (p. 718), a move that mirrors my Dylan-esque diatribe from chapter four against border guards. Even if student support teams are not implemented, students experiencing homelessness must have adult advocates who are in regular contact with the student so that needs are met. The instability associated with homelessness extends past a lack of stable housing (Biggar, 2001; Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003; Karabanow et al., 2010; Kennedy, 2007; Stronge & Reed-Victor, 2000). That instability necessitates regular and thorough conversations with young adolescents experiencing homelessness. Not only would these conversations bring to light student specific needs but they would assist in actualizing the 16 “Characteristics of Successful Schools for Young Adolescents” (NMSA, 2010).

The organization of school structures could also promote deeper engagement and connection between and among students experiencing homelessness and their peers and teachers. Brinegar (2010) shared that teams—dividing students into smaller groups with a common set of teachers—could promote the sort of positive relationships that young adolescents need. Although her work focuses on immigrant students, I believe that the underlying sentiment of teams would promote “close student-to-student and student-to-teacher relationships that help students to feel they were part of a community while working to develop their own personal identity” (Brinegar, 2010, p. 4).

District Policy. North Fork School District has enacted a transportation policy for students experiencing homelessness that addresses the need for consistent transportation while ensuring anonymity. In AJ's case, this policy both helps and hinders his funds of identity. The amount of time that AJ spends in transit to and from school in district vehicles amounts to an estimated equivalent of 33 school days.

I was bored. Like, there was nothing to do.

Thirty-three days worth of being bored is a significant amount of time. Every trip that AJ takes to and from school has an average travel time that is 35 minutes longer than a direct route would take. In the afternoons, if AJ left school at the same time the bus did, he would be able to walk to the shelter and rest for 15 minutes before the bus dropped off his siblings. AJ's time is no less valuable than his classmates. Desmond (2016) describes housing instability and poverty as being extremely time consuming and taxing. Shahera Hyatt, director of the California Homeless Youth Project, uses comedy to make a similar point (Morales, 2018).

On stage during a comedy night in Chico just before the 2016 election, Shahera Hyatt is talking about two homeless teenagers she met who, while rummaging through a trash can, had the police called on them.

What was that 911 call like, she wonders aloud. Perhaps you should check your privilege and recognize that these people are less fortunate than you and not causing any harm, she imagines the dispatcher telling the caller, before waiting a beat.

"Just kidding. We'll arrest them," Hyatt-as-dispatcher quips. (para. 1-3).

Whether through gripping ethnography or stand-up comedy, the critique is the same. The life experiences of individuals experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity are viewed as less valuable and worthy of being constricted with time and discipline measures.

I mentioned in chapter four that NFSD could pick up students experiencing homelessness in district vehicles *other than* school buses and deliver them discreetly to school without classmates discovering the rationale for transport. Districts should perform a cost analysis of different transportation options. Running a Chevrolet Suburban for 15 minutes¹⁴ must be less expensive than running a school bus for the same amount of time and most definitely less than the 30-60 minutes of AJ's actual drive time. MV calls for districts to remove barriers to attendance and for students experiencing homelessness to be afforded access to the same educational opportunities (MV, 2015). Valuing their time before and after school should fall within those bounds.

State and National Policy. This study worked with one young adolescent experiencing homelessness and revealed how his needs could be better supported by school structures and staff. The implications of this work and the wealth of knowledge that AJ shared should be considered on state and national levels. The state of Georgia, for example, performed survey research with homeless liaisons to determine the efficacy of support programs (GADOE, 2016). Absent from this research was any consideration of the opinions of individuals who experience homelessness. In this study AJ showed that he is capable of being involved in conversations about his education and the supports he

¹⁴ Honestly, fifteen minutes is a stretch. Google Maps says that the trip should only take nine minutes.

receives. State and national policy initiatives must include the voices and interests of the individuals who would benefit from services.

Implications for Future Research

Throughout this study I ran into issues in pairing funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2012) with humanizing research (Paris, 2011). One of the most significant issues arose as a result of my outwardly ascribing the *homeless* fund of identity to AJ while he simultaneously pushed against it in conversations and identity artifacts. At this time, I must make it abundantly clear that AJ's resistance to self-identifying as a young adolescent experiencing homelessness should not be misconstrued as him *pulling himself up by his boot straps* nor should the results of this study be seen as implying in any way that poverty and homelessness are mindsets that can be easily pushed away. AJ may not identify as homeless, but he and his family still share less than 150 square feet of space in a homeless shelter. He may keep in touch with his friends via social media, but he still feels the need to craft an image of himself that is *not homeless*. He may feel free in school spaces to interact with friends, but that is the result of caring adults who have crafted a space where he can operate outside of the stigma associated with homelessness. Regardless of how much AJ combats dominant narratives of homelessness, he still exists in a society and country where his mother's full time job, state sponsored medical care, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program cannot support a family.

Funds of identity (Esteban-Guitart, 2012) are always, already influenced by the societal systems that govern interactions and movements. If someone were to pair funds of identity with Payne's (2003) framework to understanding poverty or Duckworth's (2016) "grit" concept, the result could be catastrophic. If the only aspects of individual's

identities that are acknowledged are the ones they personally assign to themselves, societal structures—like institutional racism and neoliberalism—will continue to go unchallenged, left free to cycle and perpetuate under the illusion that individuals will be able to overcome any obstacle of their own accord.

AJ challenged my perceptions of homelessness and illuminated ways that I continue to position young adolescents experiencing homelessness in deficit-oriented, single-story sorts of ways. Throughout the duration of my relationship with AJ I found myself needing “to be called in” (personal correspondence, Henning, 2018). My bias, prejudice, and deficit perspectives needed to be confronted. For example, let’s return to a conversation with AJ about being picked up first by the bus.

AJ: *[The bus] picked me up from the shelter, but we're first though. So when we get on the bus in the morning, there's nobody on the bus. When we get off the bus, there's nobody on the bus. Unless they do double routes.*

Matt: *Oh, does that happen a lot?*

AJ: *Mm-mm (negative).*

Matt: *No? Okay. I understand why they do that, because they want to keep you safe, right? They want to make sure that nobody sees where you get picked up, nobody sees where you get dropped off.*

AJ: *So I don't know how they feel. I don't know why they picking me up first and dropping me off last.*

I dropped my line of questioning after AJ’s response. Partly out of a desire to hold fast to the humanizing aspects of the study. Paris (2011) calls for relationships built on dignity and care. In this instance dignity and care requires that I drop my agenda and recognize

that AJ doesn't want to continue. Also, dignity and care required me to acknowledge how I was subconsciously assigning a deficit value to AJ's homeless fund of identity. The tone and subtext not available in a transcript is that I presented AJ's residing in the shelter as something that should be kept in confidence. That it was a source of shame. Even in the midst of trying to combat deficit perspectives surrounding homelessness, I am sucked back in to the dominant narratives. AJ essentially said *unfollow* and ignored my concern. After all, AJ is the expert in his own life.

Exercising my own vulnerability, this study seems to fall short of being fully youth-engaged. When I found that the state of Georgia failed to ask individuals experiencing homelessness about perceived efficacy of school district supports, I wish that I had asked AJ what his thoughts were. When we made the identity artifacts, I wish that I had asked AJ if he wanted to share the findings with anyone in particular. In writing up the findings and crafting the narrative, I should have asked AJ how he wants to share the findings and narrative. I should have asked him how he would encourage change. What I did do, however, was focus the study around the lived experiences of AJ. He was the driving force. He had choice, from the identity artifacts he created to the number of slices of pizza he ate. Because AJ and I still talk with each other, I will continue to engage with this youth-engaged and humanizing work. I will seek his direction about how he wants this work to move forward. Would he like to share it in some way? Would he like to elaborate on certain aspects? Would he like to challenge others? What does he view as the implications?

Recommendations for Future Research

The results of this research study point to four areas of focus for future research with respect to young adolescents experiencing homelessness: (1) improved and elaborated participatory methodologies for working with individuals and groups experiencing homelessness, (2) technology usage by students experiencing homelessness, (3) elicitation of thoughts about support structures and adult advocates, and (4) extending the findings of the current study.

This study utilized relatively new methodologies for eliciting the experiences of young adolescents experiencing homelessness. The participatory methods of identity artifact creation only date back to 2012 in the literature, and they have largely only been used as a means of developing culturally responsive and sustaining curriculum (Esteban-Guitart, 2012; Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014b; Joves et al., 2015; Subero et al., 2017). Due to young adolescents experiencing homelessness' lack of representation in educational research (Aviles de Bradley, 2011; Biggar, 2001; Saldanha, 2015), more efforts should be made to identify their funds of identity and gauge the level and efficacy of supports provided.

AJ's proficiency with his cellphone was impressive. He was able to leverage the phone's capabilities for his benefit both digitally and interpersonally. The results of this study show a young adolescent who is thoroughly and capably engaged with technology. Is this common amongst young adolescents from similar circumstances? How have other young adolescents experiencing homelessness engaged with technology to meet their educational and personal needs? A study of this kind could prove to be quite attractive in the current landscape of educational research. A study that combines technology, equity,

and collaboration amongst departments or programs might even result in opportunities for grant funding on a large scale.

Also on a large scale, young adolescents should be provided opportunities to contribute to policy conversations. This could be accomplished through large-scale survey research across the United States that is either government backed (state or federal) or through one of the many youth homelessness support organizations. Beginning iterations of such a survey could include a q-sort (Reiber, 2017) or a rank order (Jennings, 2007) where young adolescent respondents force rank supports provided by local education agencies according to personal interpretations of efficacy. This work would not only challenge research performed and documented in the Georgia Department of Education's (2016) McKinney-Vento report, but it would contribute to the representation of young adolescent voices in middle level education research.

Extending upon the findings of the current study would accomplish multiple goals. First, it would improve and elaborate upon the use of funds of identity as a measure of efficacy. Second, it would provide an opportunity to corroborate findings from the present study. Corroboration would promote the validity and reliability of these participatory methodologies so that findings could be considered in policy contexts. Third, individual supports that benefitted AJ could be tested in similar single participant case studies. Doing so would add legitimacy and, like single-case experimental design, an evaluation of the impact of interventions (Cox, Gast, Luscre, & Ayres, 2009).

Concluding Thoughts

I want to briefly return to a conversation that AJ and I had while he created the first map of his school (Figure 4.3). He described tape on the floor of his school's

cafeteria that he is supposed to stay within. He doesn't question the tape or the consequences of stepping outside the lines. In a way, I have also laid tape on the ground for him. I have my beliefs about students experiencing homelessness. For example, I assumed (like the NFSD district staff) that getting picked up from a shelter was something to be ashamed of. I attached a stigma to a life and experience that is not my own. Not only did AJ step outside of that tape on the floor that I laid, he completely disregarded it and would not acknowledge its existence. While I worked to confront homelessness, I reified its narratives to a certain extent. Navigating that tightrope will be something that I must engage with throughout my life as a critically minded researcher and educator.

The overarching goal of this dissertation was to challenge dominant narratives surrounding homelessness. Society's perceptions of individuals experiencing homelessness have slowly calcified into their present state. Whether through media (Pimpare, 2017a, b); religion (Washington Post & Kaiser Family Foundation, 2017); classrooms (e.g., Payne, 2003); or any other means; dominant narratives state that individuals experiencing homelessness are delinquent, dirty, troubled, and are a bad influence on their classmates (Crook, 2015; Kim, 2013). The study was strongly influenced by critical pedagogies, youth-engaged research, humanizing relationships, and funds of identity. It painted a picture of homelessness and one youth who experiences it from a different perspective, from an "in spite of" perspective. AJ is a successful student in spite of his multiple moves. AJ maintains numerous friendships in spite of attending seven different schools before finishing the fifth grade. AJ will continue to overcome in spite of the struggles associated with homelessness. Eventually, though, AJ's "in spite of"

perspective may be overpowered by a meritocratic perspective that places blame on him like it placed blame on his mother before him.

The vignette from the beginning of this chapter reads like the joyful conclusion to a middle grades fiction book. The protagonist has resolution. The threat has been removed and the events that filled previous pages can be left on those pages, never to be heard from again. I wish that I could write AJ's story that way. Sadly, that was not the case. I am writing these sentences from the same coffee shop I referenced in chapter one. It has been more than a month since AJ told me about their impending move and it has yet to happen. I am holding on to hope. I know he is too, but he will continue to make do regardless of where he lays his head.

He is a hero and I will carry his stories with me. Whenever I encounter other young adolescents experiencing homelessness, they will first be compared to AJ. Their mothers to Dora. Their siblings to AJ's four younger brothers and sisters. Their relatives to AJ's grandmother and aunts. Their teachers to Ms. Johns. Their school counselors to Ms. Pine. Their districts to North Fork. It is unavoidable.

But...

Then I need to remind myself of Kozol's (1988) words that spoke to me from the pages of *Rachel and Her Children*, "The use of the unrestrictive term, 'the homeless,' is in certain ways misleading. It suggests a uniform set of problems and a single category of poor people...the uniformity is in their mode of suffering, not in themselves" (p. 115). Each young adolescent experiencing homelessness has a story that must be celebrated. They all have funds of identity that need to be discovered. Their passions and interests need support from caring adult advocates. Their schools need to identify and eliminate

barriers that stand in the way of meeting their educational needs. Their friendships must be strengthened. Their voices must be heard as the experts that they are. Their hopes and dreams must be supported just like their classmates. Most of all, these young adolescents must be allowed to live their lives according to personal desires.

REFERENCES

- Adichie, C. N. (2009). The danger of a single story [Video File]. Retrieved from https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story?language=en
- Ali, H., ullah, S., Kashif, N. u., & Khan, E. A. (2015). Inter-correlation among factors contributing to empathetic instruction at secondary school level. *Pakistan Journal of Social Science*, 35(1), 123-132.
- Andreou, A. (2015, February 18). Anti-homeless spikes: 'Sleeping rough opened my eyes to the city's barbed cruelty.' *The Guardian*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/feb/18/defensive-architecture-keeps-poverty-undeen-and-makes-us-more-hostile>
- Andrews, P. G. (2011). Middle grades education policy: Stagecraft to strategy. *Middle School Journal*, 43(2), 54-63.
- Andrews, P. G. (2013). Past as prologue in middle grades education. In P. G. Andrews (Ed.), *Research to guide practice in middle grades education* (pp. 52-74). Westerville, OH: Association for Middle Level Education.
- Anooshian, L. J. (2003). Social isolation and rejection of homeless children. *Journal of Children and Poverty*, 9(2), 115-134.
- Apple, M. W., Au, W., & Gandin, L. A. (2009). Mapping critical education. In M. W. Apple, W. Au, & L. A. Gandin (Eds.), *The Routledge international handbook of critical education* (pp. 3-19). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Applegate, K. (2015). *Crenshaw*. Harrisonburg, VA: Feiweland and Friends.
- Association for Supervision, Curriculum, and Development [ASCD]. (2014). *Whole school, whole community, whole child: A collaborative approach to learning and health*. Alexandria, VA: Author.
- Aubrey, C., & Dahl, S. (2006). Children's voices: The views of vulnerable children on their service providers and the relevance of services they receive. *British Journal of Social Work*, 36(1), 21-39.
- Aviles De Bradley, A. M. (2011). Unaccompanied homeless youth: Intersections of homelessness, school experiences, and educational policy. *Child & Youth Services*, 32(2), 155-172.
- Bagnoli, A. (2004). Researching identities with multi-method autobiographies. *Sociological Research Online*, 9(2), Retrieved from <http://www.socresonline.org.uk/9/2/bagnoli.html>
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), Article 2.
- Bell, A., Ewaida, M., Lynch, M. R., & Zenkov, K. (2011). Student perspectives on quality teaching: Words and images. *Voices from the Middle*, 19(1), 32-40.
- Bender, K., Yang, J., Ferguson, K., & Thompson, S. (2015). Experiences and needs of homeless youth with a history of foster care. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 55, 222-231.
- Benson, J. E., & Johnson, M. K. (2009). Adolescent family context and adult identity formation. *Journal of Family Issues*, 30(9), 1265-1286.

- Bentley, M. L., Fleury, S. C., & Garrison, J. W. (2007). Critical constructivism for teaching and learning in a democratic society. *Journal of Thought*, 42(2), 9-22.
- Biggar, H. (2001). Homeless children and education: An evaluation of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 23(12), 941-969.
- Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc. (1999). *National building code*. Country Club Hills, IL: Author.
- Bogensneider, K. (2014). *Family policy matters: How policymaking affects families and what professionals can do* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Bondy, E., & Ross, D. D. (2008). The teacher as warm demander. *Educational Leadership*, 66(1), 54-58.
- Braciszewski, J. M., Toro, P. A., & Stout, R. L. (2016). Understanding the attainment of stable housing: A seven-year longitudinal analysis of homeless adolescents. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 44(3), 358-366.
- Briggs, M. A., Granado-Villar, D. C., Gitterman, B. A., Brown, J. M., Chilton, L. A., Cotton, W. H., et al. (2013). Providing care for children and adolescents facing homelessness and housing insecurity. *Pediatrics*, 131(6), 1206–1210.
- Brinegar, K. (2010). “I feel like I’m safe again”: A discussion of middle grades organizational structures from the perspectives of immigrant youth and their teachers. *Research in Middle Level Education Online*, 33(9), 1-14.
- Brinegar, K. (2015). A content analysis of four peer-reviewed middle grades publications: Are we really paying attention to every young adolescent? *Middle Grades Review*, 1(1), Article 4.

- Bruce, M., Chance, R., & Meulemans, L. (2015). Joining forces for families: An embedded response to neighborhood poverty. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 28(6), 750-756.
- Burke, K., & Greene, S. (2015). Participatory action research, youth voices, and civic engagement. *Language Arts*, 92(6), 387-400.
- Burke, K. J., Greene, S., & McKenna, M. K. (2016). A critical geographic approach to youth civic engagement: Reframing educational opportunity zones and the use of public spaces. *Urban Education*, 51(2), 143-169.
- Cahill, C. (2007). Doing research with young people: Participatory research and the rituals of collective work. *Children's Geographies*, 5(3), 297-312.
- Calabrese Barton, A. (2000). Crafting multicultural science education with preservice teachers through service-learning. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 32(6), 797-820.
- California Department of Education. (2016). Consolidated state performance report for state formula grant programs under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended in 2001. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/sy14-15part1/ca.pdf>
- Carroll, J. (2013). *Boys' use of technology in the middle years: A home-school comparison*. (Unpublished doctoral thesis). University of Canberra, Bruce, Australia.
- Center for Applied Special Technology. (2018). Universal design for learning guidelines version 2.2. Retrieved from <http://udlguidelines.cast.org>
- Centers for Disease Control. (2017). Mycoplasma pneumonia infection. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/pneumonia/atypical/mycoplasma/index.html>

- Chandler, A. (2017). *Pupil services homeless education program: Executive summary*. Los Angeles, CA: Los Angeles Unified School District.
- Chow, K. A., Mistry, R. S., & Melchor, V. L. (2015). Homelessness in the elementary school classroom: Social and emotional consequences. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 28(6), 641-662.
- Christensen, P., & Prout, A. (2002) Working with ethical symmetry in social research with children, *Childhood*, 8(4), 477–497.
- Clark, A. (2010). Young children as protagonists and the role of participatory, visual methods in engaging multiple perspectives. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 46(1-2), 115-123.
- Clark, A. (2011a). Breaking methodological boundaries? Exploring visual, participatory methods with adults and young children. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 19(3), 321-330.
- Clark, A. (2011b). Multimodal map making with young children: Exploring ethnographic and participatory methods. *Qualitative Research*, 11(3), 311-330.
- Clark, J. (2004). Participatory research with children and young people: Philosophy, possibilities and perils. *Action Research Expeditions*, 4(11), 1-18.
- Cook County Sheriff's Office. (2017). Eviction procedure: Plaintiff's guide. Retrieved from <https://www.cookcountysheriff.org/courts/civil-services/eviction-procedure-plaintiffs-guide/>
- Cook, S. (2016). *Integrating technology in early literacy: A snapshot of community innovation in family engagement*. Washington, DC: New America.

- Cooper, W. E., & Ross, J. R. (1975). Word order. In R. E. Grossman, L. J. San, & T. J. Vance (Eds.), *Papers on the parasession on functionalism* (pp. 63-111). Chicago, IL: Chicago Linguistic Society.
- Cox, A. L., Gast, D. L., Luscre, D., & Ayres, K. M. (2009). The effects of weighted vests on appropriate in-seat behaviors of elementary-age students with autism and severe to profound intellectual disabilities. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 24*, 17–26.
- Cozzarelli, C., Wilkinson, A. V., & Tagler, M. J. (2001). Attitudes toward the poor and attributions for poverty. *Journal of Social Issues, 57*, 207–227.
- Crabtree, B. F., & Miller, W. L. (1999). *Doing qualitative research* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Crook, C. (2015). Educating America's homeless youth through reinforcement of the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act. *Faulkner Law Review, 6*(2), 395-408.
- Cunningham, K. A. (2014). A question of priorities: A critical investigation of the McKinney-Vento Act. *Critical Questions in Education, 5*(3), 218-232.
- Dalton, M. (2015, June 7). Graduation coaches help Georgia students cross the finish line. *nprED*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/sections/ed>

- Daoud, N., & Pellegrino, A. (2016). Power and citizenship through youth-centered project-based clinical practice. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 60(4), 471-474.
- Davies, B., & Bansel, P. (2007). Neoliberalism and education. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 20(3), 247-259.
- de Saxe, J. (2015). A neoliberal critique: Conceptualizing the purposes of school. *Catalyst: A Social Justice Forum*, 5(1). Article 7.
- de Saxe, J., & Smith, G. (2016). Introducing novice teachers to corporate and neoliberal educational reforms: Challenges and opportunities. *The SoJo Journal: Educational Foundations and Social Justice Education*, 2(1), 45-58.
- Decter, A. (2007). *Lost in the shuffle: The impact of homelessness on children's education in Toronto*. Toronto, Ontario, Canada: Community Social Planning Council of Toronto.
- Desmond, M. (2016). *Evicted: Poverty and profit in the American city*. New York, NY: Crown.
- DiCicco, M., Cook, C. M., & Faulkner, S. A. (2016). Teaching in the middle grades today: Examining teachers' beliefs about middle grades teaching. *Middle Grades Review*, 2(3), Article 3.
- Doda, N. M. (2013). The challenge of equity in the middle grades. In P. G. Andrews (Ed.), *Research to guide practice in middle grades education* (pp. 331-354). Westerville, OH: Association for Middle Level Education.
- Duckworth, A. (2016). *Grit: The power of passion and perseverance*. New York, NY: Scribner.

- Ellis, A. L., & Geller, K. D. (2016). Unheard and unseen: How housing insecure African American adolescents experience the education system. *Education and Urban Society, 48*(6), 583-610.
- Esteban-Guitart, M. (2012). Towards a multi methodological approach to identification of funds of identity, small stories and master narratives. *Narrative Inquiry, 22*(1), 173-180.
- Esteban-Guitart, M. (2016). *Funds of identity: Connecting meaningful learning experiences in and out of school*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Esteban-Guitart, M., & Moll, L. C. (2014a). Funds of identity: A new concept based on the funds of knowledge approach. *Culture & Psychology, 20*(1), 31-48.
- Esteban-Guitart, M., & Moll, L. C. (2014b). Lived experience, funds of identity and education. *Culture & Psychology, 20*(1), 70-81.
- Every Student Succeeds Act [ESSA], P.L. 114-95, 20 U.S.C. § 6301 (2015).
- Feuer, A. (2012, February 3). Homeless families, cloaked in normality. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com>
- Fine, M., Torre, M. E., Burns, A., & Payne, Y. A. (2007). Youth research/participatory methods for reform. In D. Thiessen & A. Cook-Sather (eds.), *International handbook of student experience in elementary and secondary school*, (pp. 805–828). Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Springer.
- Foscarinis, M. (1991). The politics of homelessness: A call to action. *American Psychologist, 46*(11), 1232-1238.

- Foster-Fishman, P. G., Law, K. M., Lichty, L. F., & Aoun C. (2010). Youth ReACT for social change: A method for youth participatory action research. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 46(1-2), 67-83.
- Fournier, M. E., Austin, S. B., Samples, C. L., Goodenow, C. S., Wylie, S. A., & Corliss, H. L. (2009). A comparison of weight-related behaviors among high school students who are homeless and non-homeless. *Journal of School Health*, 79(10), 466-473.
- Fowler, P. J., Toro, P. A., & Miles, B. W. (2009). Aging-out of foster care: Pathways to and from homelessness and associated psychosocial outcomes in young adulthood. *American Journal of Public Health*, 99(8), 1453–1458.
- Fox, M., Mediratta, K., Ruglis, J., Stoudt, B., Shah, S., & Fine, M. (2010). Critical youth engagement: Participatory action research and organizing. In L. Sherrod, J. Torney-Putra, & C. Flanagan (Eds.), *Handbook of research and policy on civic engagement with youth* (pp. 621-650). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Press.
- Frasquilho, D., Ozer, E. J., Ozer, E. M., Branquinho, C., Camacho, I., Reis, M., Tome, G., Santos, T., Gomes, P., Cruz, J., Ramiro, L., Gaspar, T., Simoes, C., Piatt, A. A., Holsen, I., & Gaspar de Matos, M. (2016). Dream teens: Adolescents-led participatory project in Portugal in the context of the economic recession. *Health Promotion Practice*, 19(1), 51-59.
- Freire, P. (1974/2013). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York, NY: Bloomsbury.

- Gast, D. L., & Ledford, J. R. (Eds.). (2014). *Single case research methodology: Applications in special education and behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Georgia Department of Education [GADOE]. (2011). *Student support teams (SSTs): Structure and process*. Atlanta, GA: Author.
- Georgia Department of Education [GADOE]. (2016). *Georgia's McKinney-Vento program: 2015 data report*. Atlanta, GA: Author.
- Gilderbloom, J. I., Squires, G. D., & Wuerstle, M. (2013). Emergency homeless shelters in North America: An inventory and guide for future practice. *Housing and Society, 40*(1), 1–37.
- Giroux, H. (2012). *Disposable youth: Racialized memories and the culture of cruelty*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Gorski, P. C. (2011). Unlearning deficit ideology and the scornful gaze: Thoughts on authenticating the class discourse in education. *Counterpoints, 402*, 152-173.
- Gorski, P. C. (2012). Perceiving the problem of poverty and schooling: Deconstructing the class stereotypes that miss-shape education practice and policy. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 45*(2), 302-319.
- Gorski, P. C. (2013a). *Reaching and teaching students in poverty: Strategies for erasing the opportunity gap*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Gorski, P. C. (2013b). Building a pedagogy of engagement for students in poverty. *Kappan, 95*(1), 48-52.
- Gorski, P. C. (2016, May). Re-examining beliefs about students in poverty. *School Administrator, 17-20*.

- Grant, R., Gracy, D., Goldsmith, G., Shapiro, A., & Redlener, I. E. (2013). Twenty-five years of child and family homelessness: Where are we now? *American Journal of Public Health, 103*(S2), e1–e10.
- Graue, M. E., & Walsh, D. J. (1998). *Studying children in context: Theories, methods, and ethics*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Green, K. (2014). Doing double Dutch methodology: Playing with the practice of participant observer. In J. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. 147-160). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Greene, S., Burke, K., & McKenna, M. (2013). Forms of voice: Exploring the empowerment of youth at the intersection of art and action. *The Urban Review, 45*(3), 311-334.
- Greene, S., Burke, K. J., & McKenna, M. (2014). Reframing spatial inequality: Youth, photography, and a changing urban landscape. In H. R. Hall, C. C. Robinson, & A. Kohli (eds.), *Uprooting urban America: Multidisciplinary perspectives on race, class and gentrification* (pp. 107-127). New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Greenhow, C., Robelia, B., & Hughes, J. E. (2009). Learning, teaching, and scholarship in a digital age Web 2.0 and classroom research: What path should we take now? *Educational Researcher, 38*(4), 246-259.
- Grineski, S. (2014). The multi-dimensional lives of children who are homeless. *Critical Questions in Education, 5*(3), 203-217.

- Guba, E., & Lincoln, Y. (2005). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 191–215). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Hallam, R. A., Buell, M. J., & Ridgley, R. (2003). Preparing early childhood educators to serve children and families living in poverty: A national survey of undergraduate programs. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 18(2), 115-124.
- Hallett, R. E. (2011). *Educational experiences of hidden homeless teenagers: Living doubled-up*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Hallett, R. E. (2012). Living doubled-up: Influence of residential environment on educational participation. *Education and Urban Society*, 44(4), 371-391.
- Hallett, R. E., Low, J. A., & Skrla, L. (2015). Beyond backpacks and bus tokens: Next steps for a district homeless student initiative. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 28(6), 693-713.
- Hallett, R. E., Skrla, L., & Low, J. A. (2015). That is not what homeless is: A school district's journey toward serving homeless, doubled-up, and economically displaced children and youth. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 28(6), 671-692.
- Harris, L. T., & Fiske, S. T. (2006). Dehumanizing the lowest of the low: Neuroimaging responses to extreme out-groups. *Psychological Science*, 17, 847– 853.
- Henry, M., Watt, R., Rosenthal, L., & Shivji, A. (2016). *The 2016 annual homeless assessment report (AHAR) to congress part 1*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Hilton, A., & Hilton, G. (2013). Incorporating digital technologies into science classes:

Two case studies from the field. *International Journal of Pedagogies and Learning*, 8(3), 153-168.

Horowitz, S. V., Boardman, S. K., & Redlener, I. (1994). Constructive conflict

management and coping in homeless children and adolescents. *Journal of Social Issues*, 50(1), 85-98.

Horti, S. (2018, January 21). Minecraft had 74 million active players in December, a new record for the game. *PC Gamer*. Retrieved from

<https://www.pcgamer.com/minecraft-had-74-million-active-players-in-december-a-new-record-for-the-game/>

Hudson, A., & Nandy, K. (2012). Comparisons of substance abuse, high-risk sexual

behavior, and depressive symptoms among homeless youth with and without a history of foster care placement. *Contemporary Nurse*, 42(2), 178-186.

Hughes, H. E. (2014). Unexpected manifestations of (dis)orientation: Learning from

twelve-year-old girls how to talk-back in order to be enough. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(3), 363-376.

Hughes, H.E. (2016). Racialized bodies as lived experiences: How phenomenology might

offer literacy studies a new perspective on the body. In G. Enriquez, E. Johnson,

S. Kontovourki, & C. Mollizi, (Eds.). *Literacies and the body: Theories in*

research on teaching, learning, and embodiment (pp. 122-135) New York:

Routledge.

- Hughes-Decatur, H. (2012). Red flags are blowin' on The Tyra Banks Show! Acknowledging the body in middle grades education. *Middle School Journal*, 43(4), 50-58.
- Iwasaki, Y., Springett, J., Dashora, P., McLaughlin, A., McHugh, T., & Youth 4 Yeg Team. (2014). Youth-guided youth engagement: Participatory action research (PAR) with high-risk, marginalized youth. *Child & Youth Services*, 35(4), 316-342.
- Jacobs, M. M. (2014). Literacy, education, and inequality: Assimilation and resistance narratives from families residing at a homeless shelter. *Critical Questions in Education*, 5(3), 172-188.
- Jacobson, J. (2015). *Paper things*. Somerville, MA: Candlewick.
- Jackson, A. W., & Davis, G. A. (2000). *Turning points 2000: Educating adolescents in the 21st century*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Jennings, L. B., Parra-Medina, D. M., Messias, D. K. H., & McLoughlin, K. (2006). Toward a critical social theory of youth empowerment. *Journal of Community Practice*, 14(1/2), 31-55.
- Jennings, T. (2007). Addressing diversity in U.S. teacher preparation programs: A survey of elementary and secondary programs' priorities and challenges from across the United States of America. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(8), 1258-1271.
- Johnson, K. A., Grazulis, J., & White, J. K. (2014). Sleep out on the quad: An opportunity for experiential education and servant based leadership. *Critical Questions in Education*, 5(3), 233-241.

- Jones, S., Thiel, J. J., Davila, D., Pittard, E., Woglom, J., Zhou, X., Brown, T., & Snow, M. (2016). Childhood geographies and spatial justice: Making sense of place and space-making as political acts in education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 53(4), 1126-1158.
- Jones, S. R., & Woglom, J. F. (2016). From where do you read the world? A graphical expansion of literacies for teacher education. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 59(4), 443-473.
- Joves, P., Siques, C., & Esteban-Guitart, M. (2015). The incorporation of funds of knowledge and funds of identity of students and their families into educational practice. A case study from Catalonia, Spain. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 49, 68-77.
- Juliannelle, P. F., & Foscarinis, M. (2003). Responding to the school mobility of children and youth experiencing homelessness: The McKinney-Vento Act and beyond. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 72(1), 39-54.
- Kagan, D. M. (1992). Implications of research on teacher belief. *Educational Psychologist*, 27(1), 65-90.
- Karabanow, J., Hughes, J., Ticknor, J., Kidd, S., & Patterson, D. (2010). The economics of being young and poor: How homeless youth survive in neo-liberal times. *Journal of Sociology & Social Welfare*, 37(4), 39-63.
- Kennedy, A. C. (2007). Homelessness, violence exposure, and school participation among urban adolescent mothers. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 35(5), 639-654.

- Kim, J. (2013). Against the unchallenged discourse of homelessness: Examining the views of early childhood preservice teachers. *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education, 34*(4), 291-307.
- Kincheloe, J. L. (2005). *Critical constructivism primer*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.
- Kincheloe, J. K., McLaren, P., & Steinberg, S. R. (2011). Critical pedagogy and qualitative research: Moving the bricolage. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (4th ed.) (pp. 163-177). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- King, J. H. (2016, July 27). Dear colleague letter. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- Kinloch, V. (2005). Poetry, literacy, and creativity: Fostering effective learning strategies in an urban classroom. *English Education, 37*(2), 96-114.
- Kinloch, V. (2007). "The white-ification of the hood": Power, politics, and youth performing narratives of community. *Language Arts, 85*(1), 61-68.
- Kinloch, V. (2009). Literacy, community, and youth acts of place-making. *English Education, 41*(4), 316-336.
- Kinloch, V., & San Pedro, T. (2014). The space between: Listening and story-ing as foundations for projects in humanization (PiH). In D. Paris & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. 21-42). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Kornbluh, M., Ozer, E. J., Allen, C. D., & Kirshner, B. (2015). Youth participatory action research as an approach to sociopolitical development and the new academic standards: Considerations for educators. *The Urban Review, 47*(5), 868-892.

- Kozol, J. (1988). *Rachel and her children: Homeless families in America*. New York, NY: Crown Publishers.
- Laitisch, D. (2013). Smacked by the invisible hand: The wrong debate at the wrong time with the wrong people. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 45(1), 16-27.
- Lamarche, P. (2011, January 29). Homeless teens more often denied shelter and separated from families. *Huffington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.huffingtonpost.com/pat-lamarche/most-shelter-seeking-home_b_815434.html
- Lane, H. B., Pullen, P. C., Hudson, R. F., & Konold, T. R. (2009). Identifying essential instructional components of literacy tutoring for struggling beginning readers. *Literacy Research and Instruction*, 48(4), 277-297.
- Lane, J. D., Ledford, J. R., & Gast, D. L. (2017). Single-case experimental design: Current standards and applications in occupational therapy. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 71(2), 7102300010.
- Lesko, N. (1996). Past, present, and future conceptions of adolescence. *Educational Theory*, 46(4), 453-472.
- Lesko, N., & Mitschele, K. (2013). Rethinking adolescence. In P. G. Andrews (Ed.), *Research to guide practice in middle grades education* (pp. 105-127). Westerville, OH: Association for Middle Level Education.
- Lushey, C. J., & Munro, E. R. (2015). Participatory peer research methodology: An effective method for obtaining young people's perspectives on transitions from care to adulthood? *Qualitative Social Work*, 14(4), 522-537.

- MacLean, M. G., Embry, L. E., & Cauce, A. M. (1999). Homeless adolescents' paths to separation from family: Comparison of family characteristics, psychological adjustment, and victimization. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(2), 179-187.
- Maguire, P., & Berge, B. M. (2009). Elbows out, arms linked: Claiming spaces for feminisms and gender equity in educational action research. In B. Somekh & S. Noffke (Eds.), *Handbook of educational action research* (pp. 398–408). London: SAGE.
- Making Caring Common Project. (2014). About. Retrieved from <https://mcc.gse.harvard.edu/about>
- Markward, M. J., & Biros, E. (2001). McKinney revisited: Implications for school social work. *Children & Schools*, 23(3), 182-187.
- Marquez-Zenkov, K., Harmon, J., van Lier, P., & Marquez-Zenkov, M. (2007). If they'll listen to us about life, we'll listen to them about school: Seeing city students' ideas about 'quality' teachers. *Educational Action Research*, 15(3), 403-415.
- Marquez-Zenkov, K. (2003). The "public art" of language arts: A new lens on educational standards. *Language Arts*, 80(5), 384-391.
- McCay, E., Quesnel, S., Langley, J., Beanlands, H., Cooper, L., Blidner, R., Aiello, A., Mudachi, N., Howes, C., & Bach, K. (2011). A relationship-based intervention to improve social connectedness in street-involved youth: A pilot study. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, 24(4), 208-215.
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 [MV], P.L. 100-77, 42 U.S.C. §§ 11431-11435 (2015).

- Miller, P. M. (2011). An examination of the McKinney-Vento Act and its influence on the homeless education situation. *Education Policy*, 25(3), 424-450.
- Miller, P. M. (2012). Educating (more and more) students experiencing homelessness: An analysis of recession-era policy and practice. *Educational Policy*, 27(5), 805-838.
- Miller, P. M., Pavlakis, A., Samartino, L., & Bourgeois, A. (2015). Brokering educational opportunity for homeless students and their families. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 28(6), 730-749.
- Mohan, E., & Shields, C. M. (2014). The voices behind the numbers: Understanding the experiences of homeless students. *Critical Questions in Education*, 5(3), 189-202.
- Mojang. (2011). *Minecraft* [Video game]. Stockholm, Sweden: Mojang.
- Moll, L. C., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & Gonzalez, N. (1992). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. *Theory Into Practice*, 31(2), 132-141.
- Moll, L. C., & Gonzalez, N. (1994). Lessons from the research with language minority children. *Journal of Reading Behavior*, 26(4), 439-455
- Morales, J. (2018, January 9). Social work alumna blends homeless advocacy with humor [Blog Post]. *The Made at Sac State Blog*. Retrieved from <https://sacstatemadeblog.wordpress.com/2018/01/09/>
- Moulton, M. J. (2017). How where we're from colors our view of the world: Committing to our students' stories is an investment in their success. *AMLE Magazine*, October 2017, 10-12.

- Nalkur, P. G. (2009). When life is "difficult": A comparison of street children's and non-street children's priorities. *Vulnerable Children and Youth Studies*, 4(4), 324-332.
- National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2016). Housing first [Fact sheet]. Retrieved from http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/housing_first
- National Center for Homeless Education. (2016). *Education of homeless children and youth (EHCY) federal data summary for school years 2012-2013 to 2014-2015*. Greensboro, NC: Author.
- National Coalition for the Homeless. (2016). *No safe street: A survey of hate crimes and violence committed against homeless people in 2014 & 2015*. Washington, D.C.: Author.
- National Middle School Association. (2010). *This we believe: Keys to educating young adolescents*. Westerville, OH: Author.
- No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 [NCLB], P.L. 107-110, 20 U.S.C. § 6319 (2002).
- Nott, B. D., & Vuchinich, S. (2016). Homeless adolescents' perceptions of positive development: A comparative study. *Child Youth Care Forum*, 45(6), 865-886.
- O'Brien, N., & Moules, T. (2007). So round the spiral again: A reflective participatory research project with children and young people. *Educational Action Research*, 15(3), 385-402.
- Obradović, J., Long, J. D., Cutuli, J., Chan, C. -K., Hinz, E., Heistad, D., et al. (2009). Academic achievement of homeless and highly mobile children in an urban school district: Longitudinal evidence on risk, growth, and resilience. *Development and Psychopathology*, 21(02), 493-518.

Office of Civil Rights [OCR]. (2015). Protecting students with disabilities [FAQ].

Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html#skipnav2>

Oliveira, J. O., & Burke, P. J. (2009). Lost in the shuffle: Culture of homeless adolescents. *Pediatric Nursing*, 35(3), 154-161.

Ozer, E. J. (2016). Youth-led participatory action research. In L. A. Jason & D. S. Glenwick (Eds.). *Handbook of methodological approaches to community-based research: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods*. (263-272). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Ozer, E. J., Rittnerman, M. L., & Wanis, M. G. (2010). Participatory action research (PAR) in middle school: Opportunities, constraints, and key processes. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 46(1-2), 152-166.

Pacheco, D., & Vélez, V. N. (2009). Maps, mapmaking, and critical pedagogy: Exploring GIS and maps as a teaching tool for social change. *Seattle Journal for Social Justice*, 8(1), 273-302.

Paris, D. (2011). 'A friend who understands fully': Notes on humanizing research in a multiethnic youth community. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 24(2), 137-149.

Paris, D., & Winn, M. T. (2014). Preface. In D. Paris, & M. T. Winn (Eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities* (pp. xiii-xx). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Payne, R. K. (2003). *A framework for understanding poverty* (3rd ed.). Highlands, TX: aha! Process.

Pellegrino, A. M., Zenkov, K., & Calamito, N. (2013a). I just want to be heard: Developing civic identity through performance poetry. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 8(1), 94-108.

Pellegrino, A. M., Zenkov, K., & Calamito, N. (2013b). "Pay attention and take some notes": Middle school youth, multimodal instruction, and notions of citizenship. *The Journal of Social Studies Research*, 37(4), 221-238.

Pellegrino, A. M., Zenkov, K., Gallagher, M. A., & Long, L. (2016). Picturing new notions of civic engagement in the U.S.: Youth facilitated, visually-based explorations of the perspectives of our least franchised and most diverse citizens. In S. Greene, K. J. Burke, & M. K. McKenna (Eds.), *Youth voices, public spaces, and civic engagement* (pp. 25-49). New York, NY: Routledge.

Phelan, J., Link, B. G., Moore, R. E., & Stueve, A. (1997). The stigma of homelessness: The impact of the label "homeless" on attitudes toward poor persons. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 60, 323-337.

Photovoice. (n.d.). *The photovoice manual*. Retrieved from www.photovoice.org

Pimpare, S. (2017a). *Ghettos, tramps, and welfare queens: Down and out on the silver screen*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

Pimpare, S. (2017b, August 17). Where do we learn that poverty is shameful and dangerous? At the movies. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/>

- Pine Tree Legal. (2017). Rights of Maine renters: Eviction [Fact sheet]. Retrieved from <https://ptla.org/rights-maine-renters-eviction>
- Powers-Costello, E., & Swick, K. J. (2008). Exploring the dynamics of teacher perceptions of homeless children and families during the early years. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 36(3), 241-245.
- Powers-Costello, E., & Swick, K. J. (2011). Transforming teacher constructs of children and families who are homeless. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 39(3), 207-212.
- Rahman, M. A., Turner, J. F., & Elbedour, S. (2015). The U.S. homeless student population: Homeless youth education, review of research classifications and typologies, and the U.S. federal legislative response. *Child Youth Care Forum*, 44(5), 687-709.
- Reiber, L. (2017). Lloyd's q sort tool for teaching [Web log post]. Retrieved from http://lrieber.coe.uga.edu/qsort/making_of.html
- Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act, P.L. 113-79, 42 U.S.C. §§ 1751-1769 (2014).
- Rideout, V. (2015). *The common sense census: Media use by tweens and teens*. San Francisco, CA: Common Sense.
- Roschelle, A. R., & Kaufman, P. (2004). Fitting in and fighting back: Stigma management strategies among homeless kids. *Symbolic Interaction*, 27, 23-46.
- Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing: A guide to theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

- Roy, E. (2015). When we design for disability, we all benefit [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=1&v=g2m97gPI70I
- Saldanha, K. (2015). Promoting and developing direct scribing to capture the narratives of homeless youth in special education. *Qualitative Social Work, 14*(6), 794-819.
- Sato, M., & Lensmire, T. J. (2008). Poverty and Payne: Supporting teachers to work with children of poverty. *Phi Delta Kappan, 90*(05), 365-370.
- Schwandt, T. A. (2007). *The SAGE dictionary of qualitative inquiry* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Schwandt, T. A., & Gates, E. (2018). Case study methodology. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln, *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 341-358). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Silverman, D. (2017). *Doing qualitative research* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Smiley, A. D., & Helfenbein, R. J. (2011). Becoming teachers: The Payne effect. *Multicultural Perspectives, 13*(1), 5-15.
- Smith, T. W., & Strahan, D. (2004). Toward a prototype of expertise in teaching: A descriptive case study. *Journal of Teacher Education, 55*(4), 357-371.
- Social Solutions. (2016). 2016's shocking homeless statistics [Web log post]. Retrieved from <http://www.socialsolutions.com/blog/2016-homelessness-statistics/>
- Solari, C. D., Shivji, A., de Sousa, T., Watt, R., & Silverbush, M. (2017). *The 2017 annual homeless assessment report (AHAR) to congress part 2*. Washington, DC: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development.
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

- State of Utah Broadband Outreach Center. (2016). HUD proposes new broadband rule changes [Web log post]. Retrieved from <https://broadband.utah.gov/2016/05/25/hud-proposes-new-broadband-rule-changes/>
- Steinkuhler, C. (2008). Cognition and literacy in massively multiplayer online games. In J. Coiro, M. Knobel, C. Lankshear, & D. Leu (Eds.), *Handbook of research on new literacies* (pp. 611–613). New York, NY: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Stronge, J. H., & Reed-Victor, E. (2000). *Educating homeless students: Promising practices*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.
- Subero, D., Vujasinovic, E., & Esteban-Guitart, M. (2017). Mobilizing funds of identity in and out of school. *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 47(2), 247-263.
- Sulkowski, M. L. (2016). The student homelessness crisis and the role of school psychology: Missed opportunities, room for improvement, and future directions. *Psychology in the Schools*, 53(7), 760-771.
- Sulkowski, M. L., & Joyce-Beaulieu, D. K. (2014). School-based service delivery for homeless students: Relevant laws and overcoming access barriers. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 84(6), 711-719.
- Taylor, J., Gibson, B., & Hurd, K. (2015). Parental preschool choices and challenges when young children and their families experience homelessness. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 56, 68-75.
- Through Students' Eyes [TSE]. (2013). About Through Students' Eyes. Retrieved from <http://www.throughstudenteyes.org/TSE/About.html>

- Tierney, W. G., & Hallett, R. E. (2010). Writing on the margins from the center: Homeless youth + politics at the borders. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 10(1), 19-27.
- Tobin, K., & Moulton, M. J. (2018, April). Homeless education case study: The continuing importance of supporting and educating teachers. In J. Obradović (Chair), *Promoting positive adaptation among homeless and highly mobile students*. Symposium conducted at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA), New York, NY.
- Tomlinson, C. A., & Murphy, M. (2018). Empathetic school. *Educational Leadership*, 75(6), 21-27.
- Toolis, E. E., & Hammack, P. L. (2015). The lived experience of homeless youth: A narrative approach. *Qualitative Psychology*, 2, 50-68.
- Tropp Laman, T., Jewett, P., Jennings, L. B., Wilson, J. L., & Souto-Manning, M. (2012). Supporting critical dialogue across educational contexts. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, 45(1), 197-216.
- United States Department of Education. (2016). Supporting the success of homeless children and youth [Fact sheet]. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160315ehcyfactsheet072716.pdf>
- United States Department of Education. (2017). Logo. *Touching Base*, 10(12), 1.
- United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. (1987). *Public housing occupancy handbook directive number 7465.1*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

- United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2011). Homeless emergency assistance and rapid transition to housing: Defining “homeless”. *Federal Register*, 76(233), 75994-76019.
- Vasudevan, L., Rodriguez Kerr, K., Hibbert, M., Fernandez, E., & Park, A. (2014). Cosmopolitan literacies of belonging in an after-school program with court-involved youths. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 57(7), 538-548.
- Washington Post & Kaiser Family Foundation. (2017). *Survey of rural America*. Menlo Park, CA: Authors.
- Weinstein, S., & West, A. (2012). Call and responsibility: Critical questions for youth spoken word poetry. *Harvard Education Review*, 82(2), 282-302.
- Wilkins, B. T., Mullins, M. H., Mahan, A., & Canfield, J. P. (2016). Homeless liaisons’ awareness about the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act. *Children & Schools*, 38(1), 57-64.
- Winn, M. T., & Ubiles, J. R. (2011). Worthy witnessing: Collaborative research in urban classrooms. In A. Ball & C. Tyson (Eds.), *Studying diversity in teacher education* (pp. 295-308). Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association.
- Wissman, K. K., Staples, J. M., Vasudevan, L., & Nichols, R. E. (2015). Cultivating research pedagogies with adolescents: Created spaces, engaged participation, and embodied inquiry. *Anthropology & Education Quarterly*, 46(2), 186-197.
- Wong, J. H., Elliott, L. T., Reed, S., Ross, W., McGuirk, P., Tallarita, L., & Chouinard, K. (2009). The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act Subtitle B-Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program: Turning good law into effective education. *Georgetown Journal on Poverty Law & Policy*, XVI(1), 53-115.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods* (6th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE

Zenkov, K. (2009). Seeing the pedagogies, practices, and programs urban students want. *Theory Into Practice*, 48(3), 168-175.

Zenkov, K., & Harmon, J. (2009). Picturing a writing process: Photovoice and teaching writing to urban youth. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 52(7), 575-584.

Zenkov, K., Harmon, J., Bell, A., Ewaida, M., & Lynch, M. R. (2011). Seeing our city, students, and school: Using photography to engage diverse youth with our English classes. *English Education*, 43(4), 369-389.

Zenkov, K., Harmon, J., & van Lier, P. (2008). Picture this: Seeing diverse youths' ideas about schools' purposes, supports, and impediments: Students from the "Through Eyes" project. *Multicultural Perspectives*, 10(3), 162-166.

Zenkov, K., Pellegrino, A., Sell, C., Ewaida, M., Bell, A., Fell, M., Biernesser, S., & McCamis, M. (2014). Picturing kids and "Kids" as researchers: Preservice teachers and effective writing instruction for diverse youth and English language learners. *The New Educator*, 10(4), 306-330.

Zenkov, K., Taylor, L., & Harmon, J. (2016). Boundary- and border-spanning collaborations of educators and youths: Challenging our literacy pedagogies and content. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 59(5), 503-510.

Zenkov, K., van Lier, P., Harmon, J., & Tompkins, E. (2009). Through students' eyes:

Seeing city youths' perspectives on the social nature of literacy. *Journal of*

Reading Education, 34(3), 15-22.

Ziomek-Daigle, J., & Andrews, P. G. (2009). Dropout prevention in the middle grades.

Middle School Journal, 40(5), 54-60.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: NATIONAL STUDENT HOMELESSNESS DATA TABLE

Data Table with national student homelessness information by state.

State/District/ Territory	Pop Rank	Students identified as homeless	H'lessness pop rank	MV \$ Allocations	MV \$ Per student	State population	% of total pop	% of h'lessness pop
United States		1,263,323		\$63,262,085	\$50	321,418,820		100.00%
California	1	235,983	1	\$7,540,970	\$32	39,144,818	12.18%	18.68%
New York	4	118,435	2	\$4,971,410	\$42	19,795,791	6.16%	9.37%
Texas	2	113,063	3	\$5,862,858	\$52	27,469,114	8.55%	8.95%
Florida	3	73,117	4	\$3,505,038	\$48	20,271,272	6.31%	5.79%
Illinois	5	52,333	5	\$2,983,614	\$57	12,859,995	4.00%	4.14%
Michigan	10	40,861	6	\$2,091,649	\$51	9,922,576	3.09%	3.23%
Georgia	8	37,791	7	\$2,202,823	\$58	10,214,860	3.18%	2.99%
Missouri	18	30,650	8	\$1,065,659	\$35	6,083,672	1.89%	2.43%
Arizona	14	28,393	9	\$1,416,334	\$50	6,828,065	2.12%	2.25%
Ohio	7	27,939	10	\$2,455,369	\$88	11,613,423	3.61%	2.21%
Kentucky	25	27,836	11	\$922,990	\$33	4,425,092	1.38%	2.20%
Oklahoma	27	26,979	12	\$693,626	\$26	3,911,338	1.22%	2.14%
North Carolina	9	26,613	13	\$1,870,366	\$70	10,042,802	3.12%	2.11%
Colorado	22	24,146	14	\$658,229	\$27	5,456,574	1.70%	1.91%
Oregon	26	22,637	15	\$613,967	\$27	4,028,977	1.25%	1.79%
Pennsylvania	6	22,014	16	\$2,401,896	\$109	12,802,503	3.98%	1.74%
Louisiana	24	20,277	17	\$1,248,853	\$62	4,670,724	1.45%	1.61%
Alabama	38	19,373	18	\$980,926	\$51	1,858,979	0.58%	1.53%
Massachusetts	15	19,353	19	\$1,041,710	\$54	6,794,422	2.11%	1.53%
Indiana	16	19,205	20	\$1,143,010	\$60	6,619,680	2.06%	1.52%
Wisconsin	20	18,366	21	\$933,644	\$51	5,771,337	1.80%	1.45%
Virginia	12	17,876	22	\$1,093,945	\$61	8,382,993	2.61%	1.41%
Nevada	35	17,178	23	\$523,528	\$30	2,890,845	0.90%	1.36%
Maryland	19	16,096	24	\$883,445	\$55	6,006,401	1.87%	1.27%
Minnesota	21	15,196	25	\$664,628	\$44	5,489,594	1.71%	1.20%
Utah	31	14,999	26	\$394,746	\$26	2,995,919	0.93%	1.19%
South Carolina	23	13,353	27	\$1,019,733	\$76	4,896,146	1.52%	1.06%
Tennessee	17	13,259	28	\$1,274,112	\$96	6,600,299	2.05%	1.05%

Arkansas	33	10,756	29	\$669,001	\$62	2,978,204	0.93%	0.85%
Mississippi	32	10,309	30	\$831,076	\$81	2,992,333	0.93%	0.82%
New Mexico	36	10,279	31	\$516,819	\$50	2,085,109	0.65%	0.81%
New Jersey	11	10,150	32	\$1,487,585	\$147	8,958,013	2.79%	0.80%
Kansas	34	9,715	33	\$462,805	\$48	2,911,641	0.91%	0.77%
West Virginia	39	7,955	34	\$396,084	\$50	1,844,128	0.57%	0.63%
Idaho	40	7,162	35	\$255,262	\$36	1,654,930	0.51%	0.57%
Iowa	30	6,936	36	\$407,232	\$59	3,123,899	0.97%	0.55%
Alaska	49	4,018	37	\$164,770	\$41	738,432	0.23%	0.32%
Puerto Rico	28	3,628	38	\$1,669,651	\$460	3,683,238	1.15%	0.29%
District of Columbia		3,551	39	\$189,746	\$53		0.00%	0.28%
Hawaii	41	3,526	40	\$206,397	\$59	1,431,603	0.45%	0.28%
Washington	13	3,511	41	\$1,025,134	\$292	7,170,351	2.23%	0.28%
New Hampshire	42	3,335	42	\$173,611	\$52	1,330,608	0.41%	0.26%
Nebraska	37	3,317	43	\$317,735	\$96	1,896,190	0.59%	0.26%
Connecticut	29	3,192	44	\$514,685	\$161	3,590,886	1.12%	0.25%
Delaware	46	3,098	45	\$195,641	\$63	945,934	0.29%	0.25%
Montana	45	3,075	46	\$198,951	\$65	1,032,949	0.32%	0.24%
North Dakota	48	2,715	47	\$162,605	\$60	756,927	0.24%	0.21%
South Dakota	47	2,156	48	\$192,684	\$89	858,469	0.27%	0.17%
Maine	43	1,934	49	\$219,208	\$113	1,329,328	0.41%	0.15%
Wyoming	51	1,556	50	\$162,605	\$105	586,107	0.18%	0.12%
Vermont	50	1,124	51	\$162,605	\$145	626,042	0.19%	0.09%
Rhode Island	44	1,004	52	\$221,115	\$220	1,056,298	0.33%	0.08%

APPENDIX B: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT LETTER

Dear Middle School student:

My name is Matthew Moulton, and I am a graduate assistant at the University of Georgia. I work closely with Dr. Gayle Andrews, a UGA professor who teaches a class at North Fork Middle School. I am doing a research study to attempt to understand the experiences of youth from different housing situations. I would like to gather information about your experiences in your middle school and in the surrounding community. Dr. Andrews is my research advisor and will be providing guidance for the study.

In this letter, I will tell you about the study so that you can decide if you want to participate. I do not have your contact information and we will not meet until after you have self selected into the study.

If you decide to join the study, you will be asked to participate in three different activities: a brief interview discussing your experiences in middle school and in the surrounding community, a mapping exercise where you will sketch and map out your day and experiences, and a drawing activity where you will document your life and then we will have a brief conversation as we take a look at the drawings and maps you made. All of these activities will take place at a convenient location determined by you and your parent/guardian. Participating in these activities will take up no more than 8 hours all together.

Being in this study could involve discussing sensitive topics. I will make every effort to reduce the emotional impact of these discussions, drawing on my training as a counselor. I will protect your privacy by replacing your name with a pseudonym, also known as a fake name. Your confidentiality will be protected to the degree possible.

This study may not help you, but it may help other students like you. Dr. Andrews and I will use what we learn from the study as we train future teachers, help prepare middle school teachers to work with students facing insecure access to housing, and help guide schools towards more beneficial learning experiences for students.

Participating in this study is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusing take part or for stopping at any time. If you decide not to take part or change your mind and stop taking part, it will not affect your school experience. You can choose not to answer any question.

Inside this packet you will find a parental/guardian consent form, a student assent form, and contact information for me and for Dr. Andrews. If you and your parent/guardian agree that you are willing to participate in the study, please ask your parent/guardian to

get in touch with me *by calling or texting me at 713-485-9024 or emailing me at matthew.moulton@uga.edu*

Sincerely,

Matthew Moulton
University of Georgia
713-485-9024
matthew.moulton@uga.edu

Dr. Gayle Andrews
University of Georgia
706-248-7461
gandrews@uga.edu

APPENDIX C: PARENTAL PERMISSION FORM

What is this study about?

Matthew Moulton, a graduate assistant at the University of Georgia working under the supervision of Dr. Gayle Andrews, is doing a research study to attempt to understand the experiences of youth in middle school. He would like to learn about the school and community experiences of middle school students from different housing situations.

Why are you being asked to be a part of the study?

You are being asked if you will give Parental Permission for your child to be a part of this study because your child is a middle school student whose housing situation meets the qualifications for the study. The school is handing this information out to students who they believe are eligible to be in this study rather than giving us your contact information in order to protect your privacy.

The researcher wants to tell you about the study so that you can decide if you provide parental permission for your child to participate. Once the study makes sense to you, you can decide if you want to participate. Please ask questions if there is anything that is not clear, or if you have any other questions. You will be provided a copy of this letter for your records.

If your child joins the study, what will happen?

Your child will be asked to participate in three different activities:

- Activity A: A brief interview discussing experiences in middle school and in the surrounding community.
- Activity B: A mapping exercise where your child draws out their school and maps out their day and experiences.
- Activity C: A drawing exercise where your child will document experiences in their life using drawings and then have a brief discussion with Mr. Moulton as they look at the drawings together.

All of these activities will take place at a convenient location determined by you and your child. Participating in these activities will take up no more than 8 hours all together.

Will the study hurt your child?

Being in this study could involve discussing sensitive topics in interviews. Every effort will be made to reduce the emotional impact of these discussions. If your child has any concerns, she or he should contact their school counselor, _____, by email or phone at _____.

The researcher thinks that the only possible harm would be a loss of privacy or embarrassment if someone other than Mr. Moulton or Dr. Andrews saw or heard the transcripts from the conversations. So we will protect your child by replacing their name with a fake name. Only the researchers can link the fake name to your child's name. Only the researchers will have passwords to the computer that has the data obtained from this study. Answers from all of the people who take part in the study will be grouped together so that individuals cannot be identified and the results may be published, presented in conferences, and/or shared with future and practicing teachers.

If your child reveals in conversation that they have been the victim of abuse or that they are a threat to themselves or others, it is the researcher's obligation to report to appropriate officials. If you have any questions about this aspect of the consent form, please contact the researcher.

Will the study help your child?

This study may not help your child, but it may help other students. The information your child shares with us will be used to train future teachers, help prepare North Fork teachers, and help guide schools towards more beneficial learning experiences for students.

Does your child have to be in the study?

Participating in research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusing to take part or for stopping at any time. If you decide not to allow your child to take part or change your mind and stop taking part, it will not affect your child's grades or experience in school. Your child can choose not to answer any question.

How will data be collected?

Audio recordings and digital scans of the maps and drawings created by your child will be used as data. Audio recordings are needed so that interviews can be transcribed and analyzed. Digital scans of maps and drawings created by your child are needed in order to document how they view their school and community. Once the study is complete these audio recordings will be destroyed.

We would like to use some of your child's individual work from this study in our final publications and presentations. If you would prefer we keep this data only between study team members, you may opt-out by saying "no" while still allowing your child to participate in this study.

"I am willing to have parts of my child's audio recording included in final presentations about this study." Please initial below:

____ Yes, I agree.

____ No, I do not agree.

"I am willing to have the maps and/or drawings created by my child included in final presentations about this study." Please initial below:

____ Yes, I agree.

_____ No, I do not agree.

WHOM CAN YOU CONTACT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this study you may contact Matthew Moulton: Telephone (713) 485-9024, email: matthew.moulton@uga.edu. If you have any questions about your child's rights as a study participant, you may contact the Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, Telephone (706) 542-3199, e-mail: IRB@uga.edu.

HAVE YOU READ EVERYTHING AND DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE STUDY?

If you agree to allow your child to participate in this study, please sign and date below and notify Matthew Moulton via telephone (713-485-9024) or email (matthew.moulton@uga.edu) so that he may follow up with your child.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Your Child's Name

Date

Name of Parent/Guardian

Researcher Signature

Date

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT ASSENT LETTER

What is this study about?

Matthew Moulton, a graduate assistant working under the supervision of Dr. Gayle Andrews at the University of Georgia, is doing a research study to attempt to understand the experiences of youth in middle school. He would like to gather information about your experiences in your middle school and the surrounding community.

This letter tells you about the study so that you can decide if you want to participate. Please ask questions if there is anything that is not clear, or if you want to know anything else about the study. You will be provided a copy of this letter for your records.

If you decide to join the study, what will happen?

You will be asked to participate in three different activities:

- Activity A: A brief interview discussing your experiences in middle school and in the surrounding community.
- Activity B: A mapping exercise where you will sketch your school and map out your day and experiences.
- Activity C: A drawing exercise where your child will document experiences in their life using drawings and then have a brief discussion with Mr. Moulton as they look at the drawings together.

All of these activities will take place at a convenient location determined by you and your parent/guardian. Participating in all of these activities will take up no more than 8 hours.

Will the study hurt you?

Being in this study could involve discussing sensitive topics in interviews. Every effort will be made to reduce the emotional impact of these discussions. If you have any concerns, please contact your school counselor, _____, by email or phone at _____.

The researcher thinks that the only possible harm would be a loss of privacy or embarrassment if someone other than Mr. Moulton or Dr. Andrews saw or heard the transcripts from the conversations. So we will protect you by replacing your name with a fake name. Only the researchers can link the fake name to your name. Only the researchers will have passwords to the computer that has the data obtained from this study. Answers from all of the people who take part in the study will be grouped together so that individuals cannot be identified and the results may be published, presented in conferences, and/or shared with future and practicing teachers.

If you reveal in conversation that you have been the victim of abuse or that you are a threat to yourself or others, it is the researcher's obligation to report to appropriate

officials. If you have any questions about this aspect of the consent form, please contact the researcher.

Will the study help you?

This study may not help you, but it may help other students. The information you share with us will be used to train future teachers and help teachers and schools provide more beneficial learning experiences for students.

Do you have to be in the study?

Participating in research is voluntary. There is no penalty for refusing to take part or for stopping at any time. If you decide not to take part or change your mind and stop taking part, it will not affect your grades or experiences middle school. You can choose not to answer any question.

How will data be collected?

Audio recordings, digital scans of the maps and drawings you create will be used as data. Audio recordings are needed so that interviews can be transcribed and analyzed. Digital scans of maps and drawings you create are needed in order to document how you view your school and community. Once the study is complete these audio recordings will be destroyed.

We would like to use some of your individual work from this study in our final publications and presentations. If you would prefer we keep this data only between study team members, you may opt-out by saying “no” while still participating in this study.

“I am willing to have parts of my audio recording included in final presentations about this study.” Please initial below:

____ Yes, I agree.

____ No, I do not agree.

“I am willing to have the maps and/or drawings I created included in final presentations about this study.” Please initial below:

____ Yes, I agree.

____ No, I do not agree.

WHOM CAN YOU CONTACT IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS?

If you have any questions about this study you may contact Matthew Moulton: Telephone (713) 485-9024, email: matthew.moulton@uga.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a study participant, you may contact the Chairperson, Institutional Review Board, University of Georgia, Telephone (706) 542-3199, e-mail: IRB@uga.edu.

HAVE YOU READ EVERYTHING AND DO YOU UNDERSTAND THE STUDY?

[] By checking this box, you are agreeing to be a part of the study.

Student Participant Name

APPENDIX E: DATA COLLECTION PROTOCOLS

Semi-structured Interview Protocol

During initial meeting

1. Tell me about your experiences in school.
 - a. What are some things that you like about the school?
 - b. What are some things that you would change if you had the opportunity?

Identity Artifact Protocol

Identity Artifact Creation

Map-making

1. Draw a map of your school
 - a. Label the map with the places that you go (classes, lunch, before/after school, places you hang out, etc.)
2. Identify people/places/things on the map that are strengths of HMS
3. Identify people/places/things on the map that you feel could be improved
4. Conversation taking place after creation of map:
 - a. Describe what you included in your map
 - b. What were the strengths you listed?
 - i. What about them makes you consider them strengths?
 - c. What were the things that could be improved?
 - i. What about them makes you think they could be improved?

Significant circle

Participants will be given a piece of paper with a large circle on it.

1. I would like for you to write down the people, activities, and things that are most meaningful to you in the big circle. Write inside some smaller circles the most significant people and write inside a small square activities, hobbies, or things. I would like for you to think about the center of the circle as being the most important to you. The further something is from the center of the circle the less important it is to you.
2. Conversation to take place after the significant circle is created:
 - a. Describe what you included in your significant circle.
 - i. Why did you include these things?