EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN RACE, SEXUAL ORIENTATION, AND HOUSING INSTABILITY FOR ADOLESCENTS IN TWO CALIFORNIA SCHOOL DISTRICTS

by

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ABSTRACT

CHRISTOPHER REED. Exploring the Relationships Between Race, Sexual Orientation, and Housing Instability for Adolescents in Two California School Districts.
(Under the direction of DR. BETTIE RAY BUTLER)

Increasing tensions in American society surrounding social equity issues and minority statuses (e.g. race and sexual orientation) have prompted competing social narratives. Historically marginalized groups face disparate socioeconomic, housing, and educational opportunities. The existing body of research and governmental data contends that there are strong relationships between minority status(es) and housing instability. However, most of the presently available research does not examine these relationships within the school district's economic context and local homelessness response efforts. This dissertation investigated the association of housing instability with minority status(es), school district, and homelessness response efforts. A descriptive quantitative case study among Black and White adolescents, between the ages of twelve and eighteen, identifying as heteronormative or LGBTQ+ was conducted. Data used came from the Oakland Unified School District and the Los Angeles Unified School District. This study employed Critical Race Structuralism and Quantitative Critical Theory to guide the study's analysis. Cross-sectional data from the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) survey was used for secondary data analysis. The present study analyzed intersections between race, sexual orientation, school district, and housing instability. Opportunities for further data collection and exploration were identified and implications for policy and programming were discussed.

Keywords: race, sexual orientation, housing instability

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This work is dedicated to the last of those whose work with his hands and sweat of his brow made it possible. It is for the new life whose smile is the reminder that those who remain must continue to do the same. It is for the one who believed in the dream and appreciated its worth when others did not. It is for the one who loved throughout. It is for the one who has never questioned and never faltered. And it was made possible by those who took the time to see it through.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to better understand how race, sexual orientation, and the school district's community socioeconomic distress influence housing instability in adolescence, specifically high school students. Previous research has shown the significance of socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and race as separate determining factors of adverse childhood experiences and risk outcomes in adolescence (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2022). Yet, the interaction of these risk factors with system-level drivers that contribute specifically to inequitable housing in adolescence has received less attention. There is a gap in the literature concerning the interaction of these variables, and this paper is novel because it explores that gap. As the U.S. housing shortage persists, and homelessness rates increase in densely populated areas like California – the state with the largest number of unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness in the U.S. – the academy should become more involved in determining how best to identify school-aged adolescents in historically low-income and marginalized groups who bear the burden of overrepresentation among the housing unstable.

Background

The United States is facing a housing supply and affordability crisis that is most acute for people with low incomes and from historically marginalized racial groups (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2022). As a result of this crisis, and the financial and social challenges associated with the COVID-19 global pandemic, the country is facing its fourth year of incremental growth in homelessness, reversing an eight-year decline that ended in 2018 (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). Job and income losses early in the pandemic increased the affordability challenges for millions of households already struggling to pay for

housing (Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2022). Moreover, measuring homeless populations was an already challenging task complicated further by pandemic-related health concerns, which delayed the collection of accurate nationwide counts (Briggs et al, 2013; National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) collects data on shelter usage and provides point-in-time estimates of homelessness, but these are likely underestimates because they do not account for the fluidity of special populations' living arrangements, particularly youth, who temporarily stay in family or acquaintances homes and may not fit into any single type of homelessness experience (Briggs et al, 2013; Morton et al, 2018).

Threats to the ability to obtain or maintain stable housing comprise housing instability, an "umbrella term that encompasses several dimensions of housing problems people may experience including affordability, safety, quality, insecurity, and loss of housing" (Frederick et al, 2014). Included within this umbrella is homelessness, which constitutes loss of housing, living in a place not meant for human habitation, transitional housing, living in emergency shelter, or exiting an institution (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020). For the purposes of this study, the terms homelessness and housing instability are used interchangeably. Both have been defined in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the primary piece of federal legislation related to the education of children and adolescents experiencing homelessness (McKinney-Vento Act, 2002).

Adequate housing is considered both a human right and a key social determinant of health, but in the United States there is no universal guarantee to safe and equitable access to housing (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, n.d.; United Nations, 1948). Housing stability, quality, safety, and affordability all have very direct and significant impacts on

individual and community health (World Health Organization, 2011). The U.S. government and individual state governments offer some forms of housing relief as social services based on income and need, though just one in four eligible households receive federal housing assistance (Markee, 2009). This includes assignment to public housing and qualifying vouchers exchangeable for housing, but again, not all families with children qualify for housing assistance (Briggs et al, 2013). The United Nations proclaimed housing to be a human right in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948). Specifically, Article 25 states:

> Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age, or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.

Historical Youth Homelessness

Since the 1980s, as homelessness rates peaked, representation increased steadily among people from the lowest-income households and historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups who continue to face overrepresentation (Grant et al, 2013; Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2022). In 1985, a groundbreaking systematic survey of homelessness in Ohio provided the first empirical evidence that the nation's homeless population was undergoing a demographic shift from older White men to young Black women and children (Jones, 2016). Since then, numerous researchers have supported the finding that African Americans are overrepresented in the U.S. homeless population, outsizing the percentage of those living in poverty (Jones, 2016). Black people make up roughly 12% of the U.S. population but make up roughly 37% of the homeless population (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2022). Though White people

are the largest racial group experiencing homelessness in the United States, historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups are far more likely to experience disadvantages in housing per capita as compared to their White peers (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). Experts associate this increased risk with higher unemployment rates, lower incomes, less access to healthcare, and higher incarceration rates – all of which contribute to higher rates of housing instability (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). While the National Alliance report does not specifically address educational outcomes, it does discuss economic factors that may indirectly impact school performance.

The rise in homeless individuals of color has coincided with the rise of homeless children and families, and for adolescents, housing instability introduces stress during a key window of growth and development (Grant et al, 2013; Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2022; Kull et al, 2019). Homelessness rates in younger populations grew in the 1980s (Kull et al, 2019). In 1974, Congress recognized early signs of the issue when it passed what is now known as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act which was designed to bolster protections for housing insecure youth (Kull et al, 2019). Each year, approximately 4.2 million youth and young adults experience homelessness, and about 700,000 of them are unaccompanied by family or a guardian when they do (Morton et al, 2018). According to Voices of Youth Count, a large, multicomponent study led by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago informed by a more comprehensive definition of homelessness than is included in National Housing and Urban Development policy, it is estimated that 1 in 30 adolescents (ages 13 to 17) experience homelessness including those living on the street, in shelters, in transitional housing, and other precarious housing situations like "couch surfing" (Kull et al, 2019; Morton et al, 2018;). Their findings categorize youth homelessness as both a rural and urban phenomenon with Black, Hispanic, Indigenous, and/or

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Queer (LGBTQ+) persons subpopulations at highest risk (Morton et al, 2018). The uptick in youth homelessness among historically marginalized racial and ethnic groups has direct implications on school performance, trauma exposure, and truancy risk (Morton et al, 2018). Housing unstable youth were more likely than their housing secure peers not to be engaged in some form of education, employment, or training. Nearly (46%) had spent time in juvenile detention, jail, or prison; and nearly all youth they surveyed reported consistent childhood adversity such as the death of a caregiver (Morton et al, 2018). Moreover, youth homelessness has ties to truancy and poor school performance. Homelessness can lead a young person to delay or abandon their high school or college education, derail career and life goals, and expose them to risks that can have lifelong consequences (Curry et al, 2022).

Notably, LGBTQ+ youth are disproportionately represented among homeless youth, with some experts estimating they comprise (40%) of the total youth population experiencing housing instability (Robinson, 2018). While Black youth are driven to homelessness due to factors like family tension, poverty, housing discrimination, and other by-products of systemic inequity, LGBTQ+ youth are driven to homelessness due to rejection from family members, domestic violence, and by-products of discriminatory treatment (Fraser et al, 2019; Morton et al, 2018; National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022).

Policymakers and researchers suggest that both economic factors and racial disparities should be considered when addressing homelessness, but the government's recommended interventions suggest a bias toward economic interventions (e.g., housing vouchers, rent control, increased housing supply) to address the issue (Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, 2022). In his systematic review, Jones (2016) argued if strategies to address homelessness ignore race and the impact of racial discrimination, they run the risk of failing to

address major factors that influence individuals' and families' pathways into homelessness and the keys to their successful exit out of homelessness. Organizations like the Center for Social Innovation and Supporting Partnerships for Anti-Racist Communities have responded to the imbalance in intervention types by issuing recommendations for cities that aim to tackle race and homelessness including enacting and enforcing fair housing laws, limited background checks for ex-offenders, and rent control (Wiltz, 2019).

Risk Factors and Correlates of Youth Homelessness

Housing insecurity in adolescence is most likely to occur if youth are Black, Hispanic/Latino, LGBTQ+, lack a high school diploma, and/or have had contacts with the juvenile justice system (Fusaro et al 2018; Morton et al, 2018). Youth homelessness is also associated with substance misuse, mental health problems, and foster care experiences (Morton et al, 2018). The number one correlate for elevated risk of youth homelessness is the lack of a high school diploma or General Equivalency Diploma (Morton et al, 2018). According to a 2019 Congressional Research Service report, additional primary risk factors for youth homelessness include family conflict, the youth's sexual orientation, sexual activity, school problems, pregnancy and substance use (Congressional Research Service, 2019).

Youth Homelessness in California

More than half (57%) of people experiencing homelessness in the United States in 2020 lived in one of five states: California, New York, Florida, Texas or Washington (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020). California has the largest number of homeless persons, which is understandable given that many of the states with the highest rates of homelessness also have the highest housing costs in the country (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). This study focused on California, the state with the largest number of

unaccompanied youths experiencing homelessness in the United States, with an estimated 12,000 unaccompanied youth (ages 16-25) facing at least one night of housing instability in 2019 (Curry et al, 2022). The massive problem has been met with a response from state agencies like the Homelessness Coordinating and Financing Council that includes a requirement that jurisdictions allocate 5% of homeless emergency aid program grants toward youth services (Curry et al, 2022). Moreover, California is one of 23 states to have added an optional question assessing housing instability to its Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) survey in 2017 and it is one of just two states to have multiple school districts report data from that question in 2017.

Interventions for Youth Homelessness

Numerous programs are in place to monitor risk and respond to signs of housing insecurity among youth (Wang et al, 2019). Four main categories of interventions applied to youth experiencing homelessness include: 1) individual and family therapies (i.e. cognitive behavioral therapy, motivational interviewing, etc., 2) skill building programs, 3) case management, and 4) structural interventions (such as housing support, drop-in centers, and shelters) (Wang et al, 2019). However, more high-quality research is needed on interventions that include an equity framework, leverage family-based therapies, and housing interventions (Wang et al, 2019). Few studies examined equity factors, and those that did were limited largely to gender and ethnicity. Response to unaccompanied youth homelessness has been constrained by the absence of credible data on the size and characteristics of the population and reliable means to track youth homelessness over time (Morton et al, 2018).

The promise of housing for minors typically exists through state support such as shelters, foster care systems, and programs through the Administration for Children and Families and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (U.S. Department of Housing and

Urban Development, 2020). Issues like stigmatization, family separation, and abuse in temporary housing settings result in many children and adolescents not wanting to participate in these systems and there are no other major sources for guaranteed youth housing within the United States (Congressional Research Service, 2019). Given the significance of the youth homelessness problem in California, it is vital for the state to implement various measures of proactive surveillance and legislative intervention to combat assistance hesitancy and ensure greater equity.

The state of California advocates for housing that affirms the identity of LGBTQ+ youth through AB (assembly bill) 1856 and AB 458 (National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2006). AB 1856 promotes cultural competency in homelessness intervention of the foster care system by requiring related sensitivity and best practices training for supporting LGBTQ+ youth (AB-1856, 2011; National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2006). AB 458, the Foster Care Non-Discrimination Act, was the first of its kind in the U.S. to affirm that LGBTQ+ youth be given “fair and equal access to… child and family services and placements" as well as receive direct protection from discrimination by “child welfare departments, group home facilities, and foster family agencies" (AB-458, 2003; National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2006). Due to high per-capita representation, California has also instituted LGBTQ+ youth suicide prevention programming to support existing emergency housing programs in large cities like Los Angeles and San Francisco through AB 984 (AB-984, 2019).

Other equity-based legislation includes a 2021 budgetary allocation of eight million dollars per fiscal year appropriated from the California General Fund to the Department of Housing and Community development to address racially based inequities in foster care experiences (AB-413, 2021). This legislation recognizes racial disparities that contribute to the

disproportionate negative life impacts that lead to children and adolescents of color being placed into the foster care system. It also acknowledges that inclusion in that foster care system increases the risk of homelessness as a minor and during adulthood (AB-413, 2021). The language of these bills is important due to the historic marginalization of adults and children of color. However, California has a massive population. When resources are stretched thin, the historically marginalized are often the least supported.

California has a reported population of over thirty-nine million people, according to 2022 U.S. Census Bureau data (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). It is also worth noting that the state of California has the world's 5th largest economy with a gross domestic product (GDP) exceeding 3.7 trillion USD in 2022 (Joffe, 2023). Pending passage, AB 525 aims to provide a housing supplement to the monthly payment of $1,129 received by foster youth in Supervised Independent Living Placements that is meant to cover food, housing, clothing, transportation and all other necessities (AB-525, 2023). However, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology wage calculation tool suggests that the minimum monthly income necessary to sustain basic living expenses and remain above the poverty line without other forms of assistance in many California communities far exceeds the current monthly payment (MIT, n.d.). The suggested monthly income necessary for the counties housing the cities of Los Angeles and Oakland are $3,678 and $3,874 respectively (MIT, n.d).

Other California legislation aimed to address general youth housing instability includes AB 307, AB 139, AB 14, Senate Bill (SB) 568, SB 48, and SB 258. California also has legislation empowering the provision of support services to youth experiencing housing instability beyond forms of housing placement. Like the suicide prevention program found in AB 984, the state offers various forms of support for independent agencies and has created hotlines

and websites for detailing how homeless youth can access services. AB 67 calls for a review of homeless population definitions to create a more universal standard that increases access to programming for any youth experiencing the spectrum of housing instability (AB-67, 2019). AB 1596 supports programming that helps to provide food, clothing, drug counseling, and sexual exploitation support (AB-1596, 1985).

In addition to youth services legislation, California also has legislation that expands protections beyond the federal requirements supporting the rights of housing unstable children and young adults in educational systems. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, reauthorized in 2001 by the No Child Left Behind act, provides a national generalized definition for youth homelessness to be applied to educational rights (42 U.S.C. § 11431-11435, 2002). The law requires that all local educational agencies provide equal access to free appropriate public regardless of housing status. In support of this equal educational access, California has passed AB 58 to ensure the Department of Education has a voice in the state's Homeless Coordinating and Financing council (AB-58, 2019). AB 337 was passed to prevent disruption in educational environments during emergency displacements by providing travel funds to support the transportation of students to their school of current enrollment (AB-337, 2019).

Despite all the measures taken by the state to deal with youth homelessness and recent reductions in their homeless youth population, California continues to maintain the largest homeless youth population in the United States by a significant margin (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2022). This means that despite decades of effort and continuous strides, local government and state supported interventions/policies have not been able to keep up with increasing homeless populations and juvenile homelessness. Given the health, safety, and educational risks associated with homelessness it is critical to continuously

revisit means by which to eliminate it. Having a greater understanding of the contributing risk factors to homelessness supports this effort. The present study fills gaps in the existing literature by exploring the cumulative effects of minority status intersections in order to inform future programming and policy that eliminate housing instability in an equitable fashion for all adolescents.

Statement of the Problem

Systemic institutionalized racism within United States policies and laws have decreased over time due to corrections within legalistic systems (Crenshaw, 2017). However, there remains a consistent undercurrent of racially based discrimination that negatively impacts people of color in varying ways (Crenshaw, 2017). There are many specific disparities that affect Black people in the United States at higher rates than other ethnic and racial minorities (Bell, 1995). This also applies to Black adolescents and the levels of risk that they face for negative life experiences or impacts (Bell, 1995; Lemmert, 2004).

The historical narrative provides context for the significance of the specific disparities that Black people experience in America. Without specific intervention, it can be easy for systems and policies to perpetuate disparities as they can be viewed as normative or entirely overlooked (Gates, 2014). Bringing attention to these systemic factors and the barriers that they present to Black people's ability to navigate American society is difficult due to widespread hesitation among White populations to acknowledge the existence of institutional racial discrimination or racism that is not overt in nature (Lemmert, 2004).

The result is that Black adolescents are put at higher levels of risk to negative impacts than their White counterparts despite sharing similar motivating factors of that risk (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Besides the inherent problems created by forms of risk, like housing

instability, there are the considerations as to how that risk negatively impacts adjacent life experiences such as education. This is important because education can play a significant role in varying forms of risk reduction (Darling-Hammond, 2010). Education can also boost economic mobility which is in turn related to political self-advocacy (Anderson, 1988). The nature of all these relationships is dependent and cyclical, meaning that negative systemic factors such as racism, poverty, and educational inequities weaken Black communities' ability to counter that force solely through self-determinative factors (Anderson, 1988).

The current body of knowledge quantifiably speaks to the existence of these discrepancies in outcomes (Fusaro et al, 2018). This present research sought to further that knowledge by demonstrating the connection between the social constructs of race and sexual orientation with disparities in the economic distress of communities that can contribute to challenges like housing instability. The intention was to do so in a way that quantifies the breadth of the perceived gap beyond economic similarity and demonstrates that race and sexual orientation are potentially as important as the school district or community economic status a person originates from.

Attempting to understand how race, community economic distress, and sexual orientation overlap and influence youth homelessness risk without attention to the inequitable systems that condition them creates opportunities for pathologizing and victim-blaming homeless youth. Studies have shown that youth who go to culturally affirming shelters or housing programs that also boost their financial capital have been the most successful (Curry et al, 2021; Wang et al, 2019). However, those programs are not the standard of care and numerous barriers exist for youth seeking safe and stable shelter as well as the implementation of systems attempting to monitor and support them (Wang et al, 2019). Thus, a knowledge gap exists for reliable signals

of risk and for supporting homeless youth effectively and equitably. The implications of this research are intended to generate support for future exploration of the knowledge gap by examining the effects of racism and sexuality on youth homelessness in an effort to expand understanding regarding the need for advanced equity centered interventions.

Theoretical Framework

The social theories that inform theoretical frameworks are a means for theorists and other individuals to discuss the nature of a wide range of elements within societies that are both positive and negative (Lemert & Lyon, 2002). Social theory is not inherently preoccupied with the analysis of human behavior (Lemert & Lyon, 2002). As such, the theoretical frameworks derived from social theories serve to better define the qualifying elements of said theories for the purposes of practical applications including, but not limited to, research and interventions (Lemert & Lyon, 2002).

The theoretical frameworks employed for the current research study are Critical Race Structuralism (CRS) and Quantitative Critical Theory (QuantCrit). Both Critical Race Structuralism and Quantitative Critical Theory are derived from the refinement of Critical Theory (CT) which itself arose as a philosophical criticism of the inadequacies of Marxist philosophies of equality (Horkheirmer & Adorno, 1972; Lemert, 2017, Wiggan et al., 2022). Unlike Marxism, CT recognizes the lack of social protection afforded non-majority individuals outside of the economic context (Lemert, 2012). CT also critiques the social and cultural power structures that negatively impact individuals and the ways in which this perpetuates social inequities (Horkheimer, 1972).

In recognition of systematic disenfranchisement within societies on the basis of social prescriptions or titles, CT creates a space recognizing racial/ethnic minorities and people who

express diverse gender identities and sexual orientations. Of those three constructs, race is a unique creation in that it was specifically designed to oppress and exploit targeted populations (Bell, 1995). That exploitation makes racist institutions and social policies within the United States particularly egregious because they function to promote social, economic, and political inequalities between White Americans and people of color including, but not limited to, Black people (Lemert, 2004). In recognition of the specific complexities that racialization brings to attainment of equity, the offshoots of CT that directly inform CRS were born.

Chief among these derivatives is critical race theory (CRT). Coined by Derrick Bell, CRT is a legalistic framework that examines the historical legal, policy, and social implications of racially based discrimination (Bell, 1995). This theory operates under a concept historically understood by marginalized communities of color in the American context best summed up by Charles W Mills' 1997 work *The Racial Contract*. In this book Mills argues, a segment of the population benefits from systems inaccessible to and exploitative of people of color on the basis of racial designation assigned by that same benefiting population (Mills, 2022).

CRS leads with the recognition of Mill's thesis regarding the exploitative nature of racial constructs as a leading means of promoting power (Wiggan et al., 2022). However, the theory expands to recognize how other forms of oppression also contribute to the promotion of privilege in groups with dominant or disproportional social influence (Wiggan et al., 2022). CRS frames this within the educational context through the critical examination of schools, teachers, students, and the social and educational policy makers that make overarching decisions that shape education. To redress potential oppression within this context, CRS is pillared around five central tenets.

The first of these tenets is the critical analysis of societal structures. This includes the deconstruction of inequitable laws, policies, and other governmentally supported institutions. The second tenet is the address of dominant cultural indoctrination in educational practices and policies. CRS prioritizes equitable representation in all shared social facets. The second tenet is a rejection of the normalization of social and educational frameworks that prioritize the cultural experiences of a population's majority and requires minorities to adapt (Wiggan et al., 2022).

The third tenet is the utilization of social justice in advocacy for equitable representation, access, and resources. This tenet is meant to ensure that minority populations have equitable access to the decision-making processes which determine who has access to everything from basic needs to social determinants of mobility. The fourth tenet is the synergizing of institutional change through catalyzation that deconstructs racism and bias. To accomplish this, parties coordinate their efforts to identify forms of bias that proliferate across organizations to stop and prevent its occurrence. The final tenet is the engagement in intercultural collaborative communication and actions of change. This tenet is the basic recognition that, in order to promote effective change all stakeholders and groups of varying identities must participate in the crafting of resolutions to issues (Wiggan et al., 2022).

CRS is applicable to the current study in that it encapsulates the importance of intersecting identities and how they can be used to socially disenfranchise populations and inhibit the educational process. Historically oppressed groups such as Black people, and non-heteronormative individuals coalescing with the social disenfranchisement of housing insecurity creates an even greater opportunity for vulnerability. Through the framework of CRS, the current study is designed to explore the relationships of these social statuses and their potential differences from majority group experiences. It does so by analyzing the societal structure of

homelessness in adolescent populations, advocating for equitable educational access and resources for those affected, and deconstructing the roles racism and bias play in proliferating the related inequities. In keeping with the spirit of CRS's design, the study's findings are intended to promote greater educational equity.

Quant Crit is an off-shoot of CT that recognizes raw data, and its interpretation/analysis cannot be removed from the context of the discriminatory societies in which it is produced through the inherent objectivity of mathematics, and alone might not provide an accurate depiction of phenomena (Crenshaw, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2006). In order to correct for that discrimination research must attempt to take into consideration potential social biases such as racism and sexism when interpreting data and presenting findings (Ladson-Billings, 2006). QuantCrit is structured around six central tenets that help ensure fairness in the conduction of research and balance in the framing of findings. (Crenshaw, 1991; Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The first tenet is the centrality of oppression. This is the acknowledgement that racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination exist within many societal structures in the U.S. and other places in the world. The second tenet is the acknowledgement that data and methods are not neutral. Data and its analysis can be inherently biased due to systemic or situational factors. Things like population sizes and the lack of existence of previous data can hamper the ability to obtain results with statistical significance and fail to capture the subtleties of actual phenomena. The third tenet is that data cannot speak for itself and thus needs an interpreter that provides proper context. This tenet recognizes that data is typically seen and translated through a personal lens that is often reflective of the dominant group's social narratives. To combat this data and findings must be shared with their attached social context by the presenter (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

The fourth tenet is that groups are neither natural nor inherent. This means that labels using what some would consider to be objective and subjective data points to determine a research participant's identity may fail to do so without the explicit confirmation of that participant. The fifth tenet requires researchers to take an intersectional perspective. This is the recognition that various parties may have overlapping identities. These overlapping identities may cause people who share groupings to have differing experiences within the same context despite sharing one or more elements of identity. The final tenet requires that researchers value narratives and counter-narratives. Narratives are often controlled by the dominant groups within society. Researchers must recognize that those perceptions and experiences may not be shared by minority groups and thus seek to ensure that they capture the narratives of the populations researched rather than rely on assumptions. (Ladson-Billings, 2006).

CRS is applicable to the current study in that it encapsulates the importance of marginalized identities and how they can be used to socially disenfranchise populations via housing instability which is known to have deleterious effects on the educational process. Historically oppressed groups such as Black people intersecting with non-heteronormativity and the social disenfranchisement of housing insecurity creates an even greater opportunity for vulnerability. Through the framework of CRS, the current study is designed to explore the relationships of these social statuses and their potential differences from majority group experiences through statistical analysis. It does so by analyzing the social statuses of homelessness in adolescent populations, deconstructing the roles racism and bias play in proliferating the related inequities, and advocating for equitable educational access and resources for those affected.

As a framework with a longer established history, QuantCrit is applicable to the current study because the racism that CRS explores is not amenable to quantification without contextualization. Numbers are not natural ways to quantify the impact of racism, so QuantCrit theory is used to understand the impact of CRS. The raw data used for analysis is not neutral and may thus promote the attachment of deficit-based themes to that analysis. With respect to the possibility that participants have overlapping marginalized identities, the study required the sensitivity of QuantCrit intersectional perspective taking. No current quantitative research employs these frameworks in this way thus adding to the novelty of the study.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this descriptive quantitative case study is to inform on prejudicial factors that necessitate the design of equitable homelessness interventions. This is achieved using two distinct, yet interrelated, frameworks that explore how race, sexual orientation, and community economic status of school districts shape the risk of homelessness for adolescents--CRS and QuantCrit.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study reflect the scope of the data collected in previously conducted Center for Disease Control (CDC) surveys for the YRBSS. The questions in the current study frame this data in ways that explore new relationships between the variables of risk for housing instability and demographic data. The research questions for the study include:

1.a Within each school district (case), how is the prevalence of self-reported adolescent housing instability in California related to racial identity and sexual orientation?

1.b Across cases, how is the prevalence of self-reported adolescent housing instability in California related to racial identity, sexual orientation, and school district location?

2.a Within each school district (case), what are the characteristics of local community economic distress and housing instability response efforts?

2.b Across cases, how do local community economic distress and housing instability response efforts compare?

A body of research exists exploring the various forms of disparity between Black and White Americans. The existing literature also explores forms of disparities that exist between populations who do and do not identify as LGBTQ+. The current study explores the intersection of race, sexual orientation, school districts and the interventions designed to mitigate negative impacts with the hope of informing more equitable interventions.

Methodology

This is a descriptive quantitative case study of the disparities in housing instability between Black and White adolescents of different sexual orientations in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). The study performs a secondary data analysis of cross-sectional 2017 YRBSS data to assess the risk of that housing instability. This is accomplished by using statistical analysis to test hypotheses regarding the relationships between variables within a specific case and by providing descriptions of related contextualized phenomena that require no variable manipulation. The individual cases are comprised of samples containing one of the two examined school districts populations, LAUSD or OUSD.

Study Context

The YRBSS data set used to assess the risk of housing instability was obtained through a data request to the CDC and publicly available data files hosted by the CDC. An agreement for the responsible use of the data was signed by the researcher. Community economic distress data is made publicly available via the Economic Innovative Group on their associated website through tools such as the interactive map or by direct request of the data. A license for the use of that data was obtained for this study.

YRBSS data collection is fixed, meaning that both the design of the survey and the locations for administration were predetermined before the collection began (Mertens, 2019). The current study was also fixed because it samples response sets from that fixed data. The data collection for the YRBSS was collected at single points in time (cross sectional) as opposed to a constant measurement over time (longitudinal). The Distressed Community Index (DCI) economic distress score data was aggregated at a single point in time from a data source that itself was aggregated from varying census sources collected over a period of time. Individual YRBSS participants provided data only once per administration. The DCI community tiers are based on estimates covering a five-year period for U.S. states, counties, and cities (Economic Innovation Group, n.d.). The DCI information is applicable to the two districts explored because the attending students live in already mapped and scored counties.

Analysis

The analysis of cross-sectional data was conducted using SPSS software to run cross-tabulations, Fisher exact tests, and chi-squared tests for independence in support of a descriptive quantitative analytic approach. Tables were developed showing race, sexual orientation, and housing instability characteristics for each district location. The subsequent findings were used to

explore the intersections of these characteristics and then scrutinize the landscape of monitoring and response efforts for adolescent housing instability. RQ1a**:** *Within each school district (case), how is the prevalence of self-reported adolescent housing instability in California related to racial identity and sexual orientation?* H1a: *Odds of self-reported housing instability will be greater for adolescents who are Black or LGBTQ+ than their White or heteronormative counterparts.*

Figure 1

Fisher Exact Test (Race)

		Housing Stable	Housing Unstable
District	White	A	B
	Black	C	D

Note. Contingency table used in the Fisher exact test.

$$\frac{\binom{a+c}{a}\binom{b+d}{b}(a+b)!(c+d)!}{n!} = \frac{\binom{a+c}{a}\binom{b+d}{b}}{\binom{n}{a+b}}$$

Figure 2

Fisher Exact Test (Sexual Orientation)

		Housing Stable	Housing Unstable
District	Heteronormative	A	B
	Non-Heteronormative	C	D

Note. Contingency table used in the Fisher exact test.

$$\frac{\binom{a+c}{a}\binom{b+d}{b}(a+b)!(c+d)!}{n!} = \frac{\binom{a+c}{a}\binom{b+d}{b}}{\binom{n}{a+b}}$$

RQ1b**:** *Across cases, how is the prevalence of self-reported adolescent housing instability in California related to racial identity, sexual orientation, and school district location?*

H1b: *Odds of self-reported housing instability will be greater for adolescents who are Black, LGBTQ+, and from school districts with higher community economic distress than White heteronormative adolescents from school districts with lower community economic distress.*

Figure 3

Chi-Square Analysis Formula

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O - E)^2}{E}$$

Significance of the Study

The primary issues at play are the negative effects of economic disparities on all young people and the secondary barriers that race, and sexual orientation interject that further exacerbate forms of risk such as housing instability (Williams et al., 2016). Disparities in housing instability are a problem for the United States because institutional racism historically plays a significant role in access (Solomon et al., 2019). People expressing diverse sexual orientations also suffer from historical and current housing discrimination issues (Opportunity Starts at Home, 2020). The undue burden that this places on Black families with children, independent Black youth, and LGBTQ+ youth can result in a life altering trajectory (Briggs et al., 2013). Housing instability is also associated with socioeconomic status, and that same socioeconomic status can be a predictor of future earning potential (Frederick et al., 2014). In a capitalistic housing market, access to the resources necessary to afford safe and stable housing are critical (Solomon, et al., 2019). Thus, youth who experience housing instability may be placed at a cyclical disadvantage that permeates their lives (Briggs et al., 2013).

Housing instability has negative impacts that are persistent across groups of adolescents (Frederick et al, 2014). However, the reported effects on the LGBTQ+ youth population indicate significant disparities in the likelihood of risk for non-socioeconomic related concerns to their wellness (Opportunity Starts at Home, 2020). LGBTQ+ youth experiencing housing instability in the form of homelessness are at significantly increased risk for physical and sexual assault compared to their peers, placing an already vulnerable population in greater peril (Kull et al, 2019).

Moreover, youth housing insecurity represents a crisis for adolescents who carry the weighty intersecting identities of racial minority, sexual minority, and the socioeconomically distressed. Black LGBTQ+ youth homelessness rates sit at 16%, double that of the 8% rate experienced by their White peers (Youth.gov, n.d.). In turn, that same housing instability can feed into behaviors such as vagrancy, trespassing, theft, drug usage, prostitution, or other criminalized survival/coping mechanisms (Congressional Research Service, 2019).

There exists a history of over incarceration in the United States (Wilderman & Wang, 2017). This over-incarceration has already been known to have a disproportionate effect on the Black population (Wilderman & Wang, 2017). With Black LGBTQ+ youth experiencing double the homelessness rates of their peers, there exists within that population a greater potential for encounters with legal systems due to employment of criminalized survival/coping mechanisms (Congressional Research Service, 2019). The result of this is the further disparity of their representation within the criminal justice system. Eighty-five percent of the LGBTQ+ youth experiencing juvenile incarceration are Black, Brown, or otherwise people of color (Congressional Research Service, 2019).

The current study is significant in that it explored the intersection of the variables in a way that both acknowledges known disparities while shedding new light onto the degree to which the variable of race potentially broadens the gaps in those disparities. The resulting information is of significance to parties directly impacted by youth housing instability including families, the youths themselves, and their communities. This work may benefit other groups with vested interests in racial equity, LGBTQ+ equality and equity, economic equity, and youth housing instability. Those parties include teachers and schools, advocacy groups, special interest groups, nonprofits and other organizations, researchers, policymakers, and governmental agencies.

Without mitigation, risk factors adjacent to housing instability can occur such as stagnation of economic mobility (Morton et al, 2018). This can leave entire generations of disenfranchised peoples lacking the social mobility necessary to resist falling into second class functionalist societal roles. The denial of equity-based protections from existing disenfranchisement like poverty, child hunger, and housing instability can contribute to interconnected barriers to educational participation (Morton et al, 2018). Vested stakeholders, (i.e.) young people and their parents, can potentially miss key components of the educational experiences necessary to participate in the nearly "70% of U.S. jobs" that now "require specialized knowledge and skills" (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

The current research is significant because it frames the arguments regarding how the historical disenfranchisement of Black and sexually diverse people puts them at a current socioeconomic disadvantage. Moreover, this research is significant because it demonstrates that historical disenfranchisement and racism may render effects that put current Black adolescents and LGBTQ+ youth at risk for many issues including housing insecurity. Current urban

educational contexts already have to support overwhelmingly large populations of disenfranchised BIPOC adolescents. By shining greater light on a struggle within these communities that disrupts overall health and ease of educational attainment, the research supports the dismantling of systemic barriers to educational equity.

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

This study assumed that systemic racism exists, and it can be observed through the analysis of population responses to governmental surveys and census data. The study also assumes that the respondents providing this data answered truthfully and to the best of their knowledge when completing the related questionnaires. This study hypothesizes that race and sexual orientation have a greater effect on homelessness risk when compared to indicators of environmental distress across groups, an especially bold assumption given the expensive and competitive California housing market. While this research may not be universally generalizable, it was created with the intention to promote racially equitable and sexuality spectrum affirming policy and practice.

Another delimitation of the current study was that representative counties' distressed communities index ranking data was only employed for counties that had YRBSS survey representation. It is possible that there is a greater range of experiences that could have been pulled from the data in the event that adolescents from all counties within the state were surveyed. Due to this limitation, findings may not be generalizable across all tiers due to inadequate representation.

Due to the fact that the data used is from 2017, this study does not make a full accounting of state fluctuation in population which takes into consideration immigration, migratory workforces, displaced asylum-seekers, and temporary extended state residents who are U.S.

nationals or foreign nationals with stays impacted by recent phenomena such as the COVID-19 pandemic. International economic factors, including access to work, that negatively impacted socioeconomic status during the COVID-19 pandemic could not be explored in relation to their cascading effects or related racially based health disparities.

The data used is representative of a state with a disproportionate percentage of the total United States population experiencing housing insecure as it was reported. This data is also representative of a state with a disproportionate percentage of the total United States population of LGBTQ+ individuals as reported. These facts paired with significant state based legislative and policy prescriptions for the protection of LGBTQ+ individuals that are not mirrored in some other states and may contribute to issues of interstate generalizability.

This study does not explore the fiscal health of the state economy or GDP within the scope of its own borders nor comparatively. As such state-based drivers for economics and related job markets or state specific industry were not explored.

This study was limited in the exploration of the diverse array of economic programming across governmental, private industry, and not-for-profit sectors specific to the state of California. This also includes forms of access to that programming based on racial identity or sexual orientation.

State-based social services and practices were not covered in depth. Related policy prescriptions such as participation in federal programming like Medicaid expansion and the cascading effect those prescriptions have on the socioeconomic status of the state's population were not explored. Likewise local governmental policy prescriptions and meso-/micro-level interventions at varying levels within the urban and rural school systems that address issues of

poverty and housing instability were not explored due to the magnitude of the scope of the number of counties, school systems, and individual schools.

While the researcher believes that there are adverse effects on youth education in the study sample, there were not educational variables that could adequately support this claim. Due to the density of groupings, subgroupings, and overall diasporic population diversity paired with a lack of reasonably available sources to aggregate that information, cultural and community based protective factors that mitigate housing instability were not adequately explored in this study. Cultural and community-based protective factors within racial and ethnic groupings/communities and sexual orientation groupings/communities are strengths that warrant their own continued exploration.

Definition of Terms

Black: Blackness describes a racialized classification of a diverse group of people having origin in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.

Critical Theory: A social theory that critiques and changes society for the purposes of addressing social inequity.

Diaspora: A scattered population whose origin lies in a separate geographic locale.

Distressed Communities Index: A five-tier system that examines economic well-being at the zip code level to contextualize uneven economic conditions caused by high school graduation rates, poverty rates, adult unemployment, housing vacancy rates, median household income, changes in employment, and change in establishments.

Housing insecurity: An umbrella term that encompasses several dimensions of housing problems people may experience, including affordability, safety, quality, insecurity, and loss of housing.

Housing Instability: An umbrella term that encompasses several dimensions of housing problems people may experience including affordability, safety, quality, insecurity, and loss of housing (HUD).

Homelessness: Individual or family lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence that is permanent, meant for human habitation, and does not qualify as emergency or short-term housing (HUD).

LGBTQ+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, plus (others). (Webster).

Race: A social construct used to categorize people into groups based on physical appearance, cultural background, and social factors.

Racism: The systemic oppression of a racial group to the social, economic, and political advantage of another.

Risk (as measured by the YRBSS): Six categories of health-related behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among youth and adults including: behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; sexual behaviors related to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV infection; alcohol and other drug use; tobacco use; unhealthy dietary behaviors; and inadequate physical activity.

Sexual Orientation: Sexual orientation refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to men, women, or both sexes. Sexual orientation also refers to a person's sense of identity based on those attractions, related behaviors and membership in a community of others who share those attractions (APA).

Social Determinant of Health: Conditions in which people are born, grown, live, work, and age, which are shaped by the distribution of money, power, and resources at global, national,

and local levels (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, n.d.; World Health Organization, 2011)

Socioeconomic Status: The position of an individual or group on the socioeconomic scale, which is determined by a combination of social and economic factors such as income, amount and kind of education, type and prestige of occupation, place of residence, and ethnic origin or religious background (APA).

Systemic Racism: A form of racism embedded in the laws and regulations of a society or an organization. It manifests as discrimination in areas such as criminal justice, employment, housing, health care, education, and political representation.

White: Of or relating to any of various population groups, including all individuals who identify with one or more nationalities or ethnic groups originating in Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa. Due to the colonization of significant parts of the world by people identifying as White, a variety of social institutions, including legal, economic, political, educational, religious, and cultural systems have become the standard by which other racial groups are objectified.

YRBSS: The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System is an American biennial survey of adolescent health risk and health protective behaviors such as smoking, drinking, drug use, diet, and physical activity conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a growing body of research on the prevalence of housing insecurity for adolescents, in large part due to studies funded by National Institute of Health (NIH), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The majority of published works include a focus on the history and current state of housing instability, racial disparities in homelessness, and increasing child homelessness. While these previous studies offer valuable insight into the role of individual-level drivers such as parental mental health and the effects of housing instability on youth behavior, few studies focus on the role of system-level drivers and fewer ground their approach in theory (Marcal, 2022).

The goal of this literature review is to summarize the history of youth homelessness in the United States, examine known risk factors, and detail interventions designed to interrupt the cycle. There is also a focused section on the barriers and challenges facing unaccompanied homeless youth, their advocates and intervention programs. Finally, we close with a summary of past interventions.

History and Drivers of Youth Homelessness in the United States

Housing is a key social determinant of health, meaning it is one of those "conditions in which people are born, grown, live, work, and age, which are shaped by the distribution of money, power, and resources at global, national, and local levels" (Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, n.d.; World Health Organization, 2011). For the purposes of this paper, the researcher uses the terms "homelessness" and "housing instability" interchangeably, defining both in accordance with the National Coalition for the Homeless. Housing stability, quality, safety, and affordability all have very direct and significant impacts on individual and

community health. The United Nations declared housing to be a human right in the post-World War II reconstruction of the late 1940s (United Nations, 1948).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifies that all people have the right to a standard of living adequate for their health and well-being including housing and necessary social services (United Nations, 1948). While this declaration is recognized by the U.S. government, its lack of formal treaty status means that it is mostly viewed as a promise to the citizenry and the international community. Lack of treaty status means that the declaration is not eligible for the ratification that would make it actionably binding (United Nations, 1948). The United Nations also delineates specific protections for the housing of children and adolescents in the 1989 Convention on the Right of the Child (United Nations, 1989). Article 27, section 3 stated:

> "States Parties, in accordance with national conditions and within their means, shall take appropriate measures to assist parents and others responsible for the child to implement this right and shall in case of need provide material assistance and support programmes, particularly with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing"

The U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child is a human rights treaty (United Nations, 1989). This means that if a nation ratifies the convention the agreement is binding, and proper participation is subject to international scrutiny. The U.N. convention possesses 195 signatories with the United States being the sole U.N. member state failing to ratify. While the United States. is a signing member of the convention, no U.S. president has taken the steps of negotiating the agreement and submitting it to Congress for the purposes of ratification. Thus, the United States is not bound to implement the terms of the treaty on a domestic level (United

Nations, 1989). These documents demonstrate that despite the U.S. government's acknowledgment of the crisis and effects of homelessness, child homelessness, and contributing factors such as poverty, there has been a historic lack of will to commit to systemic change that guarantees housing.

As families with children and unaccompanied minors are currently significant parts of the American homeless population, it is understood that youth homelessness is a significant problem. Youth homelessness in the U.S. is a complex and multifaceted issue, shaped by historical, social, economic, and political factors. It affects thousands of adolescents annually and has long-term implications for both individuals and society. While the phenomenon of youth homelessness has evolved over time, various systemic drivers continue to exacerbate its prevalence.

The issue of youth homelessness in the U.S. has its roots in broader socio-economic changes that occurred in the post-industrial era. The rise of urbanization and the increasing mobility of populations during the 20th century led to a displacement of families and youth from stable housing situations (Toro et al., 2007). Early reports of homeless youth during the Great Depression reflected the economic instability of the period, as many families were unable to maintain housing due to widespread job loss and poverty (Murphy, 2016). Following the economic recovery post-World War II, homelessness became more visible in urban areas, particularly among marginalized populations. The modern era of U.S. homelessness started in the early 1980s, due to the social impact of what was then the nation's worst recession since the Great Depression (NASEM, 2018). As a result of the changing economic landscape, the United States experienced deep cuts to the HUD budget, increasing gentrification of cities, deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill, high unemployment rates, the emergence of HIV/AIDS, and a low supply of affordable housing options (NASEM, 2018).

As the nation's financial standing shifted, so did the typical profile of people experiencing homelessness. From the 1960s to the early 1980s, people experiencing homelessness were likely to have been discharged from psychiatric hospitals whose funding was cut (NASEM, 2018). In the late 1980s, the United States saw people with histories of mental illness, substance use disorders, people under age 40, and poverty-driven people to shelters and streets (NASEM, 2018). By the early 1990s, there was an increase in families and HIV-positive people experiencing issues with housing stability. Today, the typical face of homelessness includes people in families with children (30%), chronically homeless individuals with disabilities (19%), unaccompanied youth (6%), and veterans (6%) (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). Since 2016, homelessness has steadily increased in the United States, bucking a nine-year decline (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). Formal recognition of youth homelessness as a distinct social problem also emerged in the 1980s when policymakers and scholars began to acknowledge that homeless youth faced unique challenges separate from adults. The passing of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in 1987 marked a turning point in the federal government's recognition of homelessness among children and youth (Nolan, 2020). This legislation provided funding for emergency shelters and support services specifically for homeless youth, thereby institutionalizing the problem within the framework of federal housing policies.

Housing instability encompasses the breadth of insecurities surrounding housing including homelessness. Homelessness itself is broken into three categories: transient, episodic, and chronic (Kuhn & Culhane, 1998). Eighty percent of people experiencing homelessness are transient, meaning they experience one-time, short-term housing insecurity. Ten percent of shelter users are episodic, meaning they have repeated, but brief shelter stays. And the other 10%

are chronic who spend each night in a shelter (Kuhn and Culhane, 1998). In 2019 there were 568,000 people suffering from homelessness on a given night, an increase of almost 10% from the previous year (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020). Of that previous year's population, a disproportionate number were people of color per capita (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020). Whereas White people in the United States comprise 77% of the population and Black people only 13% of the population, nearly half of the total population experiencing homelessness in 2019 was Black (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020). While the overall population experiencing homelessness in 2019 declined from the previous year, increases in overall population percentage for White and Black people experiencing homelessness increased. The figures demonstrate that White people, who make up nearly three quarters of the total population, represent less than half of the total homeless population (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2018; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020). This is in keeping with other studies that have demonstrated the racially based disparities in continuous lifetime experiences with homelessness where Black people experience double the affected rates of their counterparts (Fusaro et al., 2018).

When it comes to drivers of youth homelessness, family conflict, particularly abuse and neglect, is consistently identified as a primary driver of youth homelessness. Research indicates that many homeless youths come from backgrounds where they have experienced physical, emotional, or sexual abuse (Bender et al., 2015). The presence of domestic violence in the household often forces adolescents to flee for safety, with few resources available to them upon leaving (Thompson et al., 2010). A 2014 study by Hyde highlights that youth often perceive

homelessness as a preferable alternative to abusive family environments, indicating that familial dysfunction is a critical push factor in their decision to leave home.

It is not just immediate family dysfunction that drives increased homelessness rates. Youth who participate in and age out of the foster care system or who are involved with the juvenile justice system are disproportionately at risk of homelessness (Dworsky & Courtney, 2009). Many former foster youth face significant challenges in securing stable housing once they transition out of care, as they often lack the financial resources, social networks, and support systems necessary to live independently. Similarly, youth who are released from juvenile detention facilities often struggle with reintegration into society and face discrimination when seeking housing, which increases their risk of homelessness (Curry & Abrams, 2015).

Risk Factors and Correlates of Youth Homelessness

Until recently, there has been no effective nationalized efforts that provided insight into the number of American youths facing housing instability (Shehee, 2018). Of the 4.2 million people experiencing homelessness in the United States. 700,000 are unaccompanied minors (National Conference of State Legislatures, n.d.). Children and minor adolescents are viewed as a protected class in the context of American society; their protection and safety are considered paramount (United Nations, 1989). This moralistic view is reflected in legislation to provide physical protections from harm, and minimalistic accommodations for nutrition and housing through social service programs such as the supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) and housing assistance (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020). The federal and state governments also offer some medical benefits to some adolescents via Medicaid and the National Child Health Insurance Act (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020). While these countermeasures have not sufficiently alleviated the issues of

childhood hunger, lack of access to medical care, and housing, they do demonstrate the systemic acknowledgement for intervention in these correlates.

Housing instability in adolescence is also associated with substance misuse, mental health problems, foster care, juvenile justice system detention, and sexual orientation/minority status (National Conference of State Legislatures, n.d.). Youth of color are also disproportionately represented in both foster care and juvenile justice systems, both of which serve as significant pathways into homelessness. Studies indicate that Black and Indigenous youth are more likely to age out of foster care without adequate housing supports, increasing their risk of homelessness upon leaving the system (Dworsky & Courtney, 2009). Similarly, the over-policing of communities of color and the criminalization of poverty lead to higher rates of incarceration for Black and Latino youth, with many being released into homelessness after exiting the juvenile justice system (Curry & Abrams, 2015).

The compounded effect of these systems further perpetuates racial disparities in youth homelessness, as these young people are more likely to face obstacles to securing stable housing and employment post-incarceration or post-foster care (Samuels et al., 2019). These systemic failures highlight the need for reforms in both the foster care and juvenile justice systems to address the unique vulnerabilities faced by Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) youth. Education also has significant effects on youth homelessness. The number one correlate for elevated risk of youth homelessness is lack of a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma GED (National Conference of State Legislatures, n.d.). According to a 2019 congressional research service report, primary risk factors for youth homelessness also include family conflict, sexual activity, school problems, pregnancy and substance use (Congressional Research Service, 2019).

Racial Disparities in Youth Homelessness Risk

Systemic racism and structural inequities are also central to understanding the drivers of youth homelessness in the U.S. BIPOC youth are disproportionately represented among the homeless youth population (Morton et al., 2018). Structural factors such as housing discrimination, lower access to quality education, and the criminalization of poverty have contributed to the overrepresentation of these groups. According to Gaddis & Ghoshal (2020), the historical legacy of discriminatory lending practices continues to affect families of color, who are more likely to face eviction and housing insecurity, creating conditions that lead to youth homelessness.

A substantial body of research underscores the overrepresentation of youth of color, particularly African American and Indigenous youth, among the homeless youth population in the United States. According to Morton et al. (2018), Black youth are more than twice as likely to experience homelessness compared to their white peers, with Indigenous youth facing similarly heightened risks. These disparities are not solely reflective of economic factors but are intricately linked to a history of racial discrimination and exclusion in housing policies and social services (Gould-Werth & Seefeldt, 2012). Samuels et al. (2019) note that systemic inequalities in access to resources such as stable housing, education, and employment disproportionately affect BIPOC communities, placing youth in these groups at a heightened risk of homelessness.

Historically marginalized groups have a higher likelihood of being disadvantaged in both housing and housing insecure experiences (Morton et al, 2018). Experts attribute higher rates of homelessness among marginalized communities to higher unemployment rates, lower incomes, less access to healthcare, and higher incarceration rates (Morton et al, 2018). Though numerically White people represent the largest racial group experiencing homelessness at any

given time, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders (109 out of every 10,000), Native Americans (45 out of every 10,000), and Black people (52 out of every 10,000) are disproportionately overrepresented in rates of homelessness given the proportion of the population they represent (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). Compare those rates to the nation's overall rate of homelessness, which occurs in just 18 of every 10,000 people. Black youth are far more likely to be homeless than their White counterparts.

The disproportionate rates of homelessness among youth of color are deeply intertwined with structural racism in housing policy. Historical practices such as redlining and racially restrictive covenants have systematically denied Black and Indigenous families access to stable housing, contributing to generational cycles of poverty and housing insecurity (Desmond, 2016). Gaddis and Ghoshal (2020) highlight that despite the formal elimination of such practices, the legacy of these discriminatory policies persists, particularly in urban areas where gentrification and displacement disproportionately affect communities of color. These structural barriers limit access to affordable housing, thereby increasing the likelihood of youth from these communities experiencing homelessness.

Moreover, research by Curry and Abrams (2015) emphasizes that the intersection of housing instability and racial discrimination exacerbates the vulnerability of youth of color to homelessness. Housing markets continue to reflect racialized inequities, with landlords more likely to reject rental applications from Black and Indigenous families, further limiting their housing options and stability. One study found that due to cultural barriers surrounding self-identification of homelessness status Black adolescents were unable to avail themselves of the resources and services that their White counterparts had access to when experiencing homelessness (Hickler & Auerswald, 2009). Black youth's lack of access to these resources

perpetuates homelessness within the population and places an undue burden on further marginalized subgroups such as LGBTQ+ adolescents of color (Page, 2017). Varying forms of legislative and programmatic intervention have yet to address the cultural nuances necessary to facilitate their success (Page, 2017).

Socioeconomic Status and Youth Homelessness Risk

The relationship between socioeconomics and homelessness is complex and multifaceted, with economic conditions, income inequality, and housing affordability playing significant roles in determining housing stability. Poverty and deep poverty are oftentimes cyclical in nature (APA, 2022; Gowan 2010). Once homeless, individuals often struggle to find employment due to a lack of stable housing, transportation, or access to showers and clean clothes. This cyclical relationship between homelessness and unemployment creates a structural trap, making it difficult for individuals to escape homelessness once they have fallen into it.

Deepening poverty is inextricably linked with rising levels of homelessness and food insecurity (APA, 2022). Children and adolescents are particularly vulnerable to these conditions (Marcal, 2022). Costs of living and cost of housing have risen, but wages have not kept pace (Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2022). Poverty and low incomes prevent people from accessing affordable housing options. Poverty and low incomes also pose a barrier to optimal access to education which is a key determinant of socioeconomic status (Morton et al, 2018). The correlates to economic disenfranchisement such as inability to access health care and inadequate access to nutrition also negatively impact educational experiences (Morton et al, 2018). All these socioeconomically related factors serve to perpetuate one another and can have significant lifetime effects in contributing to housing instability for young people (Morton et al, 2018).

Desmond and Kimbro (2015) argue that the structural conditions of extreme poverty, particularly in urban areas, significantly limit individuals' ability to secure stable housing. Individuals living in poverty often spend a disproportionate amount of their income on rent, leaving little room for savings or unexpected expenses, which can lead to eviction and homelessness. Additionally, Fowler et al. (2019) found that poverty, coupled with a lack of social safety nets, often pushes individuals into homelessness after financial shocks, such as job loss or medical emergencies. Further exacerbating this issue is the racial wealth gap, which disproportionately affects marginalized communities. emphasize that Black and Latino populations are more likely to experience poverty due to systemic inequalities, making them more vulnerable to homelessness. McCarty et al. found that Black individuals are significantly overrepresented in the homeless population, highlighting the intersection of racial and economic disparities.

Unemployment and underemployment are critical factors in the socioeconomic landscape of homelessness. The inability to secure stable employment or being employed in low-wage jobs without benefits, leaves individuals at high risk of housing instability. Lee et al. (2020) highlight that individuals in precarious job sectors, such as retail or food services, are particularly vulnerable to becoming homeless due to the lack of job security and benefits like health insurance or paid leave. Additionally, Smith and Williams (2018) found that even those with employment often face homelessness due to low wages that do not match the rising costs of living in urban areas, where rent prices have skyrocketed.

The housing affordability crisis in the United States is another key socioeconomic driver of homelessness. According to Desmond (2016), the rise in rental prices far outpaces income growth for many Americans, particularly in metropolitan areas. The shortage of affordable

housing means that even individuals and families with moderate incomes are finding it difficult to secure stable housing, pushing more people towards homelessness. Quigley and Raphael (2001) found a direct correlation between the lack of affordable housing and the increase in homelessness, particularly in high-demand areas like San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles. Gentrification exacerbates this issue by displacing low-income residents from historically affordable neighborhoods, especially in urban communities. Newman and Wyly (2006) explain that gentrification often leads to the redevelopment of affordable housing into luxury apartments or condominiums, which are out of reach for the original residents. This displacement contributes to homelessness as long-term residents are pushed out of their communities and are unable to find affordable alternatives. Housing policies at the federal and state levels have failed to keep pace with demand, creating a crisis where youth have few affordable options once they leave the family home (Edwards et al., 2019).

The growing income inequality in the United States further drives homelessness by concentrating wealth among a small segment of the population while leaving many others struggling for financial solvency. Wright et al. (2016) found that income inequality exacerbates the vulnerability of low-income individuals to homelessness, as the safety net of affordable housing becomes increasingly inaccessible. The disparity between income and the cost of living, particularly in major cities, has created a crisis where working-class individuals are at risk of homelessness despite having jobs. The intersection of socioeconomics and structural inequality is particularly evident in marginalized communities. Culhane et al. (2013) argue that systemic racism, in conjunction with economic inequalities, places BIPOC populations at a heightened risk for homelessness. Their research found that economic policies that disproportionately affect

these groups, such as redlining and discriminatory lending practices, have long-term impacts on housing security.

Efforts to address the socioeconomic causes of homelessness have focused on policies aimed at increasing affordable housing and providing economic support to low-income populations. O'Flaherty (2019) argues that housing-first policies, which prioritize providing permanent housing without preconditions, have proven effective in reducing homelessness by addressing the immediate need for housing security. However, Shinn et al. (2017) caution that without broader economic reforms to address income inequality and poverty, housing-first policies alone will not be sufficient to solve the homelessness crisis. Additionally, Greer and Smith (2020) emphasize the need for wage reform, arguing that raising the minimum wage and providing universal benefits such as healthcare and paid leave would mitigate many of the economic factors that contribute to homelessness. These reforms, they argue, would not only prevent homelessness but also help those currently experiencing it by providing the financial stability necessary to maintain housing.

Sexual Orientation and Youth Homelessness Risk

There exists a known history of housing discrimination toward individuals of diverse sexual orientation and gender expression within the United States (Morton et al, 2018). This housing discrimination applies to LGBTQ+ youth, but adolescents of diverse sexual orientations also face risk of homelessness due to familial rejection (Keuroghlian et al, 2014; Page, 2017). Histories of familial rejection and/or caretaker discrimination can lead to identity crises which perpetuate over time and compromise mental health (Kidd, 2007). These compromises to mental health then feed back into the cycle of overall homelessness risk. This is disproportionately the case in racial and ethnic minority groupings including Black youth (Page, 2017). The LGBTQ+

youth population suffers disparities in housing instability representation as compared to their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts (Fraser et al, 2019; Keuroghlian et al, 2014).

Family conflict, particularly concerning LGBTQ+ identity, is another driver of youth homelessness that disproportionately affects youth of color. Choi et al. (2015) report that LGBTQ+ youth of color face heightened risks of both family rejection and homelessness, as they contend not only with homophobia and transphobia but also with the racialized forms of exclusion and discrimination that exacerbate their marginalization. This intersectional experience of identity-based rejection makes LGBTQ+ youth of color particularly vulnerable to homelessness, as they are often left without support systems or resources (Keuroghlian et al., 2014).

Familial rejection due to sexual orientation or gender identity is frequently cited as a primary cause of homelessness among this population (Durso & Gates, 2012). LGBTQ+ youth also face higher rates of discrimination, harassment, and violence both in shelters and on the streets, which complicates their ability to access resources and secure stable housing (Keuroghlian et al., 2014). However, the disparities do not end with instances of homelessness. LGBTQ+ youth are disproportionately vulnerable to increased mental health risk, sexual victimization, drug usage, and HIV risk (Keuroghlian et al, 2014).

Educational Attainment and Youth Homelessness Risk

The current body of literature has established that a lack of safe and consistent shelter is distracting and destabilizing to the physical and mental well-being of adolescents; and that this distraction directly negatively impacts youth educational experiences (Kull et al, 2019). Lack of a consistent physical address contributes to the complete inability to, or challenges with, obtaining services and resources associated with school performance (Kull et al, 2019). This may

include forms of direct intervention from schools, correspondence, and forms of social services. As adolescents at risk for housing instability are often suffering from poverty, they may lack resources necessary to effectively participate in school. This can include items such as clothing and school materials (Ausikaitis et al., 2014; Kull et al., 2019).

The often transient nature of homelessness as well as the need to procure resources can contribute to school evasion, and truancy enforcement without a physical address presents challenges (Ausikaitis et al, 2014). Homeless youths have significantly higher dropout rates and significantly decreased likelihood of attending four-year universities which in turn may contribute to future socioeconomic stagnation (Kull et al., 2019). Youth who fail to graduate are more likely to experience or re-experience homelessness in their lifetimes (Ausikaitis et al., 2014; Kull et al, 2019). Economic disparities further compound the risk of homelessness among youth of color. BIPOC families are more likely to live in poverty, with fewer financial safety nets to prevent housing loss (Fowler et al., 2019). A study by Powers and Jaklitsch (2018) found that economic marginalization disproportionately affects Black and Indigenous youth, particularly those living in areas with high unemployment and limited social services. In such environments, youth are more likely to leave home prematurely due to economic strain or housing instability, placing them at greater risk of homelessness.

In addition to economic barriers, educational inequities also play a crucial role in perpetuating racial disparities in youth homelessness. Schools in predominantly Black and Latino neighborhoods, which can often be found in urban contexts, lack the resources to provide adequate support to homeless students, exacerbating the challenges they face (Hallett, 2012). The school-to-prison pipeline also disproportionately affects BIPOC youth, with harsh disciplinary policies pushing them out of educational institutions and into homelessness (Wun, 2018). Such

systemic failures highlight the intersection of race, poverty, homelessness, and the achievement gap. According to Masten et al. (2015), students experiencing homelessness often perform below grade level, particularly in core subjects such as reading and math. This academic underachievement is largely attributed to the instability and stress associated with housing insecurity. Homeless students often lack a quiet place to study, access to educational resources, and consistent support from teachers and caregivers.

Moreover, Murphy and Tobin (2011) found that children facing homelessness are more likely to experience developmental delays, emotional difficulties, and behavioral problems in school. The trauma of homelessness, combined with frequent school transfers, exacerbates academic struggles and hinders educational progress (Murphy and Tobin, 2011). According to Masten et al. (2015), housing instability, frequent moves, and the stress of living in shelters or transitional housing can disrupt students' ability to concentrate and perform well in school. Herbers et al. (2012) discuss how these challenges often translate into lower academic performance and difficulty building foundational skills, leading to a long-term impact on their educational trajectory.

Homeless students are disproportionately affected by school absenteeism and mobility, which further limits their educational attainment. Cutuli et al. (2013) note that children experiencing homelessness are more likely to miss school due to transportation issues, health concerns, or family instability. High rates of absenteeism among homeless students lead to gaps in learning, making it difficult for them to keep up with their coursework. Homeless students are also more likely to change schools multiple times throughout the academic year, which further compounds their educational challenges. Obradović et al. (2009) point out that each move disrupts the learning process, leading to gaps in education and often causing students to fall

behind academically. This mobility can also isolate students socially, making it harder for them to engage in school activities, which are vital for their emotional and psychological development. In addition, Pavlakis (2018) highlights the negative effects of frequent school mobility on homeless students. Due to evictions, shelter transitions, and unstable living conditions, these students often transfer between schools multiple times during an academic year. Each transfer disrupts their learning environment, making it difficult to form relationships with teachers and peers, which is essential for academic success. Students who move frequently are also less likely to participate in extracurricular activities, further isolating them from the school community.

The most significant federal policy response to this intersection of homelessness and education is the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This legislation, first passed in 1987 and reauthorized multiple times, mandates that schools provide specific protections and support services for homeless students. Aviles de Bradley (2011) explains that the McKinney-Vento Act requires school districts to identify homeless students, provide them with transportation to their school of origin, and ensure they have access to educational resources. Despite these provisions, Cunningham et al. (2015) argue that implementation challenges often hinder the effectiveness of the McKinney-Vento Act. Many schools, particularly those in districts with high rates of homelessness, lack the resources necessary to fully support homeless students. School liaisons, tasked with coordinating services under the Act, frequently struggle with limited funding and staff, which reduces their capacity to identify and assist all students in need.

Support services, such as tutoring and counseling, have been found to improve the academic outcomes of homeless students. Herbers et al. (2012) stress the importance of early intervention programs that provide academic and emotional support to children experiencing homelessness. These programs can mitigate the negative effects of instability by offering

tutoring, mental health services, and after-school care. Studies have found that students who participated in supportive after-school programs demonstrated significant improvements in both academic performance and socio-emotional development (Herbers et al., 2012).

These interventions are crucial as the long-term educational outcomes of homeless students are concerning. Hernandez Jozefowicz-Simbeni and Israel (2006) found that homeless youth are less likely to graduate from high school compared to their housed peers. Factors such as academic underachievement, absenteeism, and mobility all contribute to lower graduation rates. Furthermore, many homeless students drop out of school before completing their education, limiting their future economic opportunities (Cunningham et al., 2015). For those who graduate, access to post-secondary education remains a challenge. Tierney et al. (2008) explore how financial barriers, lack of support networks, and the absence of stable housing contribute to low college enrollment and retention rates among homeless youth. Without adequate financial aid, mentoring, or housing options, many students are unable to continue their education beyond high school, perpetuating the cycle of poverty and homelessness.

Educational attainment is one of the most powerful predictors of future stability and success (Fantuzzo et al., 2013; Obradović et al., 2009). Without access to a quality education, students experiencing homelessness are more likely to face limited job prospects, low wages, and ongoing housing instability in adulthood. By addressing the educational barriers faced by homeless students, policymakers can create pathways out of poverty and homelessness, improving both individual outcomes and broader societal well-being.

Homelessness in California

More than half (57%) of people experiencing homelessness in the United States in 2020 lived in one of five states: California, New York, Florida, Texas or Washington (U.S.

Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020). California has the largest number of homeless persons, which is in keeping with the fact that many of the states with the highest rates of homelessness also have the highest housing costs in the country (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022).

This dissertation focused on California, the state with the largest number of unaccompanied youths experiencing homelessness in the United States, with an estimated 12,000 unaccompanied youth (ages 16-25) facing at least one night of housing instability in 2019 (Curry et al., 2022). The massive problem has been met with a well-funded response from state agencies like the Homelessness Coordinating and Financing Council, including a requirement that jurisdictions allocate 5% of homeless emergency aid program grants toward youth services (Curry et al, 2022). Moreover, the state is one of 23 states to have added an optional question assessing housing instability to its youth risk behavior surveillance system (YRBSS) survey in 2017 and 2019, and it is one of just two states to have multiple school districts report data from that question in 2019. The state of California advocates for housing that affirms the identity of LGBTQ+ youth through AB 1856 and Act-AB 458 (National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2006). AB 1856 promotes cultural competency in homelessness intervention of the foster care system by requiring related sensitivity and best practices training for supporting LGBTQ+ youth (National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2006). Act-AB 458 affirms that LGBTQ+ youth be given “fair and equal access to… child and family services and placements" as well as receive direct protection from discrimination by “child welfare departments, group home facilities, and foster family agencies" (National Center for Lesbian Rights, 2006).

Homelessness in Los Angeles

Los Angeles (LA) has long been recognized as the epicenter of the homelessness crisis in the United States. With the largest population of unsheltered individuals in the nation, the city faces unique challenges rooted in historical housing inequities, economic disparities, and systemic racism. The homeless crisis in LA is driven largely by the lack of affordable housing and the growing income disparity in the region. A study by Blasi (2019) highlighted that the annual homeless count in Los Angeles has shown an upward trend, with over 66,000 individuals experiencing homelessness in 2020, a significant portion of whom are unsheltered. This population has grown substantially in recent years, despite concerted efforts by local governments and community organizations to provide housing and support services. Fitzpatrick et al. (2018) emphasize that the high cost of living in Los Angeles, particularly housing costs that outpace wage growth, has been a critical factor driving many into homelessness. Research consistently links the housing crisis in the region to decades of underproduction of affordable housing, a phenomenon exacerbated by the economic boom in certain parts of the city that has driven up rental prices and property values.

Desmond (2016) and Flaming, Burns, & Carlen (2018) identified that increasing rental costs combined with stagnating wages disproportionately affect low-income populations, particularly in communities of color. This has created a situation where many individuals are forced to allocate an unsustainable portion of their income toward housing, leaving them at high risk for eviction and, consequently, homelessness. In their analysis, Sullivan & Anacker (2018) found that housing policies intended to promote development often incentivize luxury housing projects, pushing low-income residents further to the margins. The study reveals that these policies have intensified gentrification processes in historically marginalized communities, leading to the displacement of long-standing residents. The situation has only worsened post-

recession, as public funding for affordable housing has not kept pace with rising demand (Blasi, 2019).

Another major factor contributing to homelessness in Los Angeles is systemic inequities that disproportionately affect BIPOC communities. Sullivan (2017) identified that African Americans, who constitute 8% of the county's population, represent over one-third of the homeless population, highlighting how entrenched racial disparities are in the city's homeless crisis. Similarly, Blasi (2019) notes that discriminatory housing practices, limited access to economic opportunities, and over-policing in communities of color further perpetuate these disparities. Additionally, Hwang et al. (2020) argue that criminal justice policies and the overrepresentation of BIPOC individuals in the carceral system further exacerbate homelessness, as individuals leaving incarceration face significant barriers to securing stable housing and employment. This is particularly true for formerly incarcerated individuals who encounter discrimination from landlords and employers, leading to cyclical patterns of homelessness.

Los Angeles has responded to its homelessness crisis through various policy initiatives aimed at reducing the population of unsheltered individuals and increasing access to affordable housing. One of the most notable legislative measures has been the passage of Measure H in 2017, a sales tax increase designed to generate approximately $355 million annually to fund homeless services. Fitzpatrick et al. (2018) observed that while Measure H represents a significant investment in housing and support services, its implementation has been hindered by bureaucratic delays and an overwhelming demand for services. Blasi (2019) found that the housing construction initiative has been slow to materialize due to rising construction costs and challenges in securing suitable land for development. As of 2020, fewer than (25%) of the proposed housing units had been completed, leading some to question the efficacy of these

policy efforts in addressing the scale of the crisis. Furthermore, Baxamusa (2019) contends that without addressing the broader structural issues, including the affordability crisis and systemic inequities, these efforts will continue to fall short.

Homelessness Oakland

Homelessness in Oakland, California, reflects a broader crisis seen throughout urban areas in the United States, shaped by systemic issues such as rising housing costs, racial inequities, and historical disinvestment in affordable housing. Oakland, located in Alameda County, is one of the cities most affected by homelessness in the San Francisco Bay Area, and its homeless population has grown steadily over the years. A study by Baran et al. (2019) found that the city's homeless population grew by 47% between 2017 and 2019, a rate higher than both state and national averages. This increase correlates with rising housing costs and the widening gap between income and affordability. Additionally, Cohen (2020) highlighted that homelessness in Oakland is overwhelmingly concentrated in unsheltered populations, with many individuals living in encampments, cars, or other temporary accommodations.

The city's homelessness crisis is compounded by a lack of affordable housing options. Flaming et al. (2018) noted that over 70% of Oakland's homeless individuals are residents who were displaced due to unaffordable rents, indicating that the homelessness crisis is intrinsically linked to housing market dynamics. Oakland's housing market has been deeply affected by the larger Bay Area's real estate boom, with rent prices rising significantly faster than wages. According to Chapple and Zuk (2017), gentrification and displacement have played a central role in Oakland's housing affordability crisis, particularly in low-income and historically marginalized neighborhoods. This displacement is directly linked to the region's housing shortage, where demand far outpaces supply, especially in affordable housing units.

Flaming et al. (2018) argue that the displacement caused by gentrification disproportionately affects Black and Latino residents, many of whom have lived in these neighborhoods for generations. The study found that these populations face greater housing insecurity and are more likely to experience homelessness because of displacement. The authors further highlight that many of Oakland's newly developed housing projects cater to middle- and high-income earners, exacerbating the affordability crisis for the city's most vulnerable residents. Oakland's homeless population is starkly divided along racial lines. Studies such as Sullivan (2017) emphasize that African Americans, who make up roughly 24% of the city's population, account for over 70% of its homeless population. This overrepresentation points to deep-seated racial inequities, with Hankivsky and Christoffersen (2020) suggesting that systemic racism in housing, employment, and policing policies are significant contributors to these disparities. A study by Baciu et al. (2021) further reveals how historical practices such as redlining and exclusionary zoning have created long-term disadvantages for Black and Latino residents in Oakland, leaving them more vulnerable to displacement and homelessness. The researchers argue that these historical inequities have not been adequately addressed in modern housing policies, resulting in the perpetuation of racial disparities in homelessness.

Homelessness in Oakland is also driven by broader structural inequities that go beyond housing. O'Flaherty (2019) explored how mental health and addiction services are insufficiently integrated into homelessness interventions in the city, leaving many individuals without access to the care they need. Similarly, Smith and Stolar (2020) found that local policies aimed at addressing homelessness, such as eviction protections and rent control, have had mixed success, largely due to inadequate enforcement and loopholes that landlords can exploit. Policy failures at both the local and state levels have also exacerbated the homelessness crisis. Blasi (2020) notes

that while Oakland has implemented some progressive housing policies, such as tenant protections and inclusionary zoning laws, these efforts have been insufficient to stem the tide of displacement. Blasi emphasizes that the city's policy responses have been largely reactive rather than proactive, with most interventions occurring after residents have already been displaced or evicted.

Interventions for Youth Homelessness in the United States

The National Alliance to End Homelessness argues that ending homelessness for adolescents and young adults is dependent on their access to stable housing, supportive connections to adults, and access to mainstream services that will set them up for long-term success (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). They also call for greater systemic investment and response for unaccompanied youth and access to innovative programs that speak to the source of their homelessness including host homes, family reunification programs, crisis response, rapid re-housing, and coordinated cross-functional community responses.

The most common forms of homeless assistance are Permanent Supportive Housing (representing 39% of beds) and emergency shelter programs (representing 32% of beds) (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). But young people require more than just housing. Given the factors that drove them to homelessness be it family conflict, substance use, experiences with the criminal justice system etc., youth may also require education support, employment programs, and long-term housing options with low barriers to entry (e.g., rapid re-housing programs) (The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020).

Shelter systems provide temporary housing for 61% of people who experience homelessness, but this rate is declining (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). Temporary housing such as shelter beds and housing programs are operating at a deficit,

meaning there aren't enough beds for every person who is experiencing homelessness, with national estimates speculating that 50% of the need is met (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). While temporary housing bed availability declines, access to permanent housing programs such as Permanent Supportive Housing and Rapid Re-Housing appear to be increasing by as much as 25% (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022).

Barriers to Understanding and Intervening in Youth Homelessness

Youth homelessness is a complex and multifaceted issue in the United States, shaped by numerous socio-economic, systemic, and personal factors. Despite concerted efforts to address this crisis, there are significant barriers to fully understanding and preventing youth homelessness. According to 2020 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development point estimates, about 35,000 unaccompanied adolescents experienced a homelessness episode of one week or longer in 2019, with more than 10% under age 18 (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020). Though these counts are imprecise, they suggest that about half of homeless youth are unsheltered – higher than the rate for all people experiencing homelessness (37%) – meaning they are sleeping outside, in a car, or another nontraditional living space. Families with children are least likely to be unsheltered, representing just 10% of unsheltered people. However, unaccompanied minors not living with their families do not enjoy the same access to services as families (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). Fifty percent of unaccompanied homeless youth were unsheltered in 2020 (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022).

Progress on the road to ending homelessness has been uneven. Groups like veterans and homeless families with children have experienced 47% and 27% respective declines in homelessness rates since 2007. Experts postulate that these populations have received more

attention and prioritized resources from government jurisdictions. People often left behind in the housing gap are individual adults, persons of color, people suffering from mental illness, and unaccompanied youth (Morton et al, 2018). These combined populations have seen their rates surge as much as 43% (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022). Due to forms or discrimination and/or personal difficulties navigating systems these groups may experience issues with housing instability including affordability, safety, quality, insecurity, and loss of housing (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2020).

A primary barrier to understanding youth homelessness is the difficulty in collecting accurate data. Homeless youth are often undercounted in national surveys and official statistics because they do not typically fit into the categories used for adult homelessness, such as those living in shelters or on the streets. As Morton et al. (2018) argue, many homeless youths experience "hidden homelessness," where they may couch-surf, stay temporarily with friends, or live in unstable housing arrangements, making them harder to track. This invisibility is compounded by the reluctance of many youths to identify themselves as homeless due to stigma or fear of intervention by authorities, further skewing available data and making it difficult to assess the full scope of the issue. Moreover, the definitions of homelessness used by various government agencies, such as the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the Department of Education (DOE), differ. Cunningham et al. (2014) explain that these inconsistent definitions lead to discrepancies in how youth homelessness is counted and addressed across agencies, presenting a major barrier to effective prevention efforts.

Youth homelessness often falls through the cracks of existing policies designed primarily for adults. Many services and interventions, such as housing programs, are geared towards adult populations, with less attention paid to the unique needs of young people. Toro et al. (2007)

highlights the challenges posed by age restrictions in federal housing policies, which can prevent homeless youth from accessing critical services unless they meet specific criteria, such as being an unaccompanied minor. As a result, many youths are excluded from the very services that could help them escape homelessness. Furthermore, funding for youth-specific programs is often limited and inconsistent. Dworsky and Courtney (2009) note that while there are some federal initiatives aimed at addressing youth homelessness, such as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, these programs are frequently underfunded and fail to reach all youth in need. This results in fragmented services, where different regions and communities may have varying levels of support, leaving many homeless youths without adequate assistance.

These gaps mean that homeless youth face a range of challenges that are distinct from those of homeless adults, including developmental needs, mental health concerns, and educational barriers. However, existing services often fail to address these specific issues. Samuels et al. (2011) emphasize that many youth-specific programs lack sufficient mental health support, despite the high prevalence of trauma, depression, and substance abuse among homeless youth populations. Without access to comprehensive mental health care, many homeless youths struggle to break the cycle of homelessness. Educational services are another area where gaps exist. Aviles de Bradley (2011) points out that while the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act provides important protections for homeless students, many schools lack the resources or knowledge to fully implement these provisions, particularly in areas with high concentrations of homeless youth. This lack of targeted interventions exacerbates the long-term educational and employment challenges faced by homeless youth, limiting their ability to achieve stability.

Another significant barrier to understanding and preventing youth homelessness lies in the diverse experiences of homeless youth. Homelessness is not a monolithic experience; factors

such as race, sexual orientation, gender identity, and family background all influence the pathways into and out of homelessness. Winetrobe et al. (2013) highlight the unique challenges faced by LGBTQ+ youth, who are disproportionately represented in homeless populations and often experience higher levels of discrimination, violence, and mental health issues compared to their heterosexual peers. Similarly, Slesnick et al. (2009) discuss the distinct experiences of homeless youth from minority racial and ethnic backgrounds, who may face additional barriers related to systemic racism, such as over-policing, educational disparities, and limited access to culturally competent services. These intersecting identities and experiences make it difficult to create one-size-fits-all solutions to youth homelessness, as different groups may require different types of support and interventions.

Approaches to Homelessness Interventions

There are several existing interventions designed to meet the needs of specific segments of the homeless population. For instance, coordinated systems approach, permanent supportive housing, coordinated entry, shared data systems, and rapid re-housing are all homelessness interventions that have been effective (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2022. However, individuals and organizations implementing these interventions can fail to consider the cultural nuances necessary to be effective among diverse and historically marginalized communities. We know that historically marginalized groups do not have the same type of access to or experiences with these programs as do their White or heteronormative peers.

This study explores the interplay between race and sexual orientation in relationship to socioeconomic status and housing instability. More specifically it explores the disparity in homelessness risk between the experiences of Black, White, LGBTQ+, and heteronormative youth in the state of California. This research addresses the growing crisis of youth homelessness

in the United States and more research within this arena is necessary to increase the effectiveness of future interventions for the population.

This research is an acknowledgement of the recognition by social and governmental agencies, such as HUD, that socioeconomic positioning can be highly impactful on an adolescent's risk of homelessness. This study also recognizes the work of the past two decades that further explores the rising disparities in the youth homelessness community regarding race and sexual orientation. While there is acknowledgement of the negative impacts that lower SES can have on adolescents' overall lives including housing instability, there is a knowledge gap concerning the degree to which the intersection of race and sexual orientation influences this which the present study addresses.

Thus, existing racially equitable legislation to support youth homelessness efforts may still lack the necessary information to be optimally impactful. This can be observed in the allocations for California's Assembly Bill 413. The bill does recognize the need to address racially based inequities in foster care experiences that disproportionately negatively impact children of color (AB-413, 2021). However, given the overall number of housing unstable youth in California and the significant portion of those youth who are people of color, the eight-million-dollar allocation to close the equity gap may be insufficient given the overall cost of living in the state. The secondary data analysis employed by this study examined the existing information to track understudied elements of these previously acknowledged relationships in ways that tease out the diminishing role of economics in housing instability disparities.

Of the current existing efforts to combat youth homelessness, interventions aimed at providing housing, mental health support, and educational stability are the most successful. One of the primary strategies is the Housing First model. This approach prioritizes providing stable

housing to youth before addressing other needs such as mental health or substance use issues. Research indicates that Housing First models have been highly effective in reducing homelessness among youth populations. Henwood et al. (2015) found that youth in Housing First programs were significantly more likely to remain stably housed compared to those in traditional shelter-based interventions. This model emphasizes that securing housing without preconditions allows youth to better focus on rebuilding other aspects of their lives, such as education and employment. In addition, Wagaman et al. (2018) noted that Housing First programs catered to the specific needs of LGBTQ+ youth, who are overrepresented in the homeless population and often face unique barriers to accessing shelter services. The research underscored that by removing barriers such as mandatory drug treatment or employment requirements, Housing First programs are better suited to address the complexities of youth homelessness.

Family reconnection programs are another common intervention aimed at reducing youth homelessness, particularly among those who have recently become homeless. Samuels et al. (2019) studied interventions that focus on reconnecting homeless youth with their families, when safe and appropriate, to resolve conflict and provide a long-term solution to housing instability. These programs often incorporate family therapy and mediation to address underlying issues such as familial rejection due to sexual orientation or gender identity, especially prevalent among LGBTQ+ youth (Samuels et al., 2019). The study found that reconnecting youth with family, when feasible, reduces the likelihood of chronic homelessness and helps in rebuilding support systems that may have been lost.

Crisis intervention services also play a key role in youth homelessness. These programs provide immediate shelter and support to youth facing sudden homelessness, often due to family conflict, violence, or abuse. Hyde (2013) demonstrated the effectiveness of crisis shelters, which

provide temporary housing and mental health services to help stabilize youth before transitioning them into long-term housing solutions. These interventions are critical during the early stages of homelessness, preventing young people from becoming entrenched in the street environment.

The impact of trauma on homeless youth is profound, with many having experienced abuse, neglect, or other forms of trauma before becoming homeless. Consequently, trauma-informed care has emerged as an essential component of effective interventions for this population. Havlicek et al. (2016) found that trauma-informed programs, which acknowledge the psychological impact of trauma and provide appropriate support, led to better mental health outcomes and higher rates of engagement with services among homeless youth. These programs often include counseling, therapy, and psychiatric support, alongside housing services, to address the complex needs of this population. Furthermore, Milburn et al. (2017) examined the integration of mental health services with housing interventions, demonstrating that programs that include both components are more successful at helping youth exit homelessness. The study emphasized the importance of addressing mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety, and PTSD, which are common among homeless youth, to improve long-term stability and success in housing programs.

For many homeless youths, access to education and employment opportunities is a critical factor in overcoming homelessness. Educational interventions, including support for re-enrollment in school, have been shown to reduce the duration of homelessness and improve long-term outcomes. Tierney et al. (2014) found that homeless youth who maintained school enrollment were less likely to experience chronic homelessness and had higher rates of post-secondary education attainment. Programs such as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act provide crucial support for homeless youth by ensuring educational continuity, including

transportation and tutoring services, which help reduce barriers to school attendance. Employment programs are also central to interventions for homeless youth. Ferguson et al. (2016) evaluated vocational training and job placement programs that work specifically with homeless youth, showing that such programs lead to improved job prospects and financial stability. Employment is often seen as a key component in achieving long-term housing stability, and programs that offer job training, internships, and work placements help to address the economic roots of youth homelessness.

The existing research informs us that there are disparities in homelessness and educational equity that disproportionally have negative impacts on BIPOC and LGBTQ+ populations. Many of these vulnerable populations experience this disenfranchisement within an urban context. The research that currently exists recognizes that minority statuses contribute to homelessness and disenfranchisement from participation in educational attainment. This study builds upon the existent scholarship by recognizing previously explored disenfranchisement and contextualizing it through the lens of intersectional marginalized identities and community economics.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The existing literature in the previous chapter demonstrates that there are significant historical disparities in housing instability between groups and that these disparities are deleterious to already systematically disenfranchised peoples. Significantly less research has explored the relationships between minority status, housing instability, the location of students' school districts, and the local response efforts to address housing instability in those communities. This dissertation research attempts to add to the body of literature by describing the housing status of groups in specific school districts and exploring the local responses that support homelessness within those groups.

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the research methodology for a descriptive quantitative case study exploring disparities in cross-sectional reports of housing instability among Black and White adolescents from differing sexual orientations and California school districts. This chapter explains how secondary data was used to explore a population and address the research questions. Details about the measures that were used to gather the information, the sampling techniques used in the initial data collection, study participant selection, analysis method, and related limitations were also discussed.

Case Study Approach

The current study is motivated by the historical disparities in housing instability suffered by BIPOC and LGTBQ+ individuals in America. The individual student housing instability explored in this study falls within the context of the school district they live in, and their group status(es), e.g. racial and sexual identity, which has been known to affect housing status. Therefore, the present study falls under the pragmatic worldview which respects historical social knowledge, is receptive to social justice and political frameworks, and allows for pluralistic

approaches to methodology (Creswell, 2018). This pluralistic approach to the study design was necessitated by the fact that housing instability, its potential contributing factors, and interventions all vary greatly. Quantitative or qualitative frameworks alone might fail to capture the breadth of relevant descriptive information. Housing instability does not exist in a bubble, when children go through it, they are experiencing it in the communities in which they live and go to school. This research employed case studies to collect quantitative and qualitative data in order to inform on factors surrounding housing instability for students in the Oakland Unified School District and Los Angeles Unified School District. In turn, this information may be used to further positive outcomes for those students by promoting understanding in agencies, organizations, and research.

To conduct this research a descriptive quantitative case study was used. Case study design allows the use of descriptive data which can be contextualized within settings (Creswell, 2018; Gay, 2012; Yin, 2018). Descriptive case study provides a detailed account of particular cases to give deeper contextual understanding by describing phenomena in real-life context without manipulating variables (Gay, 2012; Yin, 2018). Quantitative case study uses numerical data and statistical analysis to test hypotheses or assess relationships between variables within a specific case, or cases, by using tools like surveys that can generate quantifiable data (Scholz & Tietje, 2002; Yin, 2018). Because quantitative case study allows for a limited number of cases to be examined together, a quantitative case study may also be a multiple case study. A multiple case study examines various cases to understand similarities and differences across contexts which provides more robust conclusions and allows for cross-case comparison. This allows for the exploration of patterns across cases to gain a broader understanding of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2018; Gay, 2012; Scholz & Tietje, 2002; Yin, 2018). A descriptive quantitative case

study combines the elements of both descriptive and quantitative approaches to describe cases in a structured way using numerical data or measurable variables.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to understand the relationship between race, sexuality, and homelessness in two major urban school districts in the state of California. The following research questions were asked in relation to that point:

1.a Within each school district (case), how is the prevalence of self-reported adolescent housing instability in California related to racial identity and sexual orientation?

1.b Across cases, how is the prevalence of self-reported adolescent housing instability in California related to racial identity, sexual orientation, and school district location?

2.a Within each school district (case), what are the characteristics of local community economic distress and housing instability response efforts?

2.b Across cases, how do local community economic distress and housing instability response efforts compare?

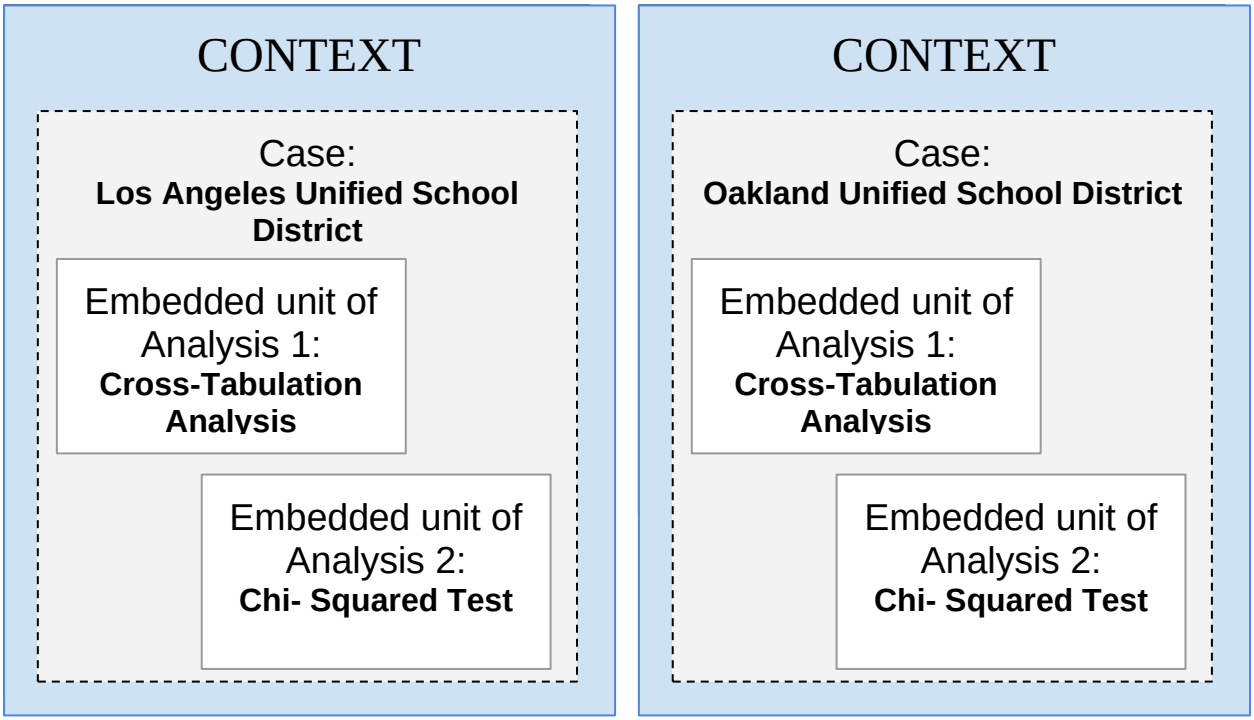
Research Design

The researcher conducted a case study using 2017 YRBSS survey data provided by two California school districts to examine the prevalence of self-reported housing instability. Given a limited sample size of housing unstable students and the non-exploratory nature of the study, the researcher employed a descriptive quantitative analytic approach that used measurable variables. Tables were developed using those variables to display racial, sexual orientation, and housing instability characteristics for each district location. Intersections of these characteristics

were studied via cross-tabulations, Fisher exact tests, and chi-squared tests of independence and that information was explored within the landscape of monitoring and response efforts for adolescent housing instability in each district. Those response efforts were the primary source of qualitative data and consisted of descriptions of the organizations, interventions, policies, and laws used within the state and each district. This approach is consistent with multiple case (embedded) design which can be applied to the current study's descriptive quantitative case design as seen below in Figure 4 (Yin, 2018).

Figure 4

Multiple Case (Embedded) Design



Study Participants

To identify adolescents who are at risk of housing instability, the researcher chose to explore a large, representative survey dataset based in California, where the nation's highest homelessness rates exist. The analysis of data from YRBSS participants in the state of

California's 2017 administration for this study was optimal for two reasons. The first reason is, the state of California's addition of supplementary questions for the YRBSS administration delivered in the Los Angeles (CA) and Oakland (CA) school districts provide data on housing instability as seen in the questionnaire items provided in Table 1. This was necessary to establish the two cases necessary for the study. The second reason is that California, having more than one large urban school district, provided a large pool of participants to strengthen the study's analysis (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). The third reason is the state of California is one of the few states with two or more different geographical regions for collection. This geographic diversity contributes to differences in the homeless populations, local economics, local policy and response efforts that diversify the examined cases.

The deidentified study sample was drawn from 2017 high school participants (grades 9 through 12) in the LAUSD and OUSD YRBSS administrations. Approximately 83,756 students across 4 school districts in 4 counties completed the survey in the state of California that year. They were selected at random using convenience sampling (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). Data were weighted to be representative of public-school students attending grades 9–12 in each jurisdiction, meaning that a mathematical procedure was employed to ensure that the data was representative of the sex, grade, and racial makeup of the populations from which it was derived (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). Since the YRBSS employs convenience sampling, participants were limited to high schools selected by the CDC as part of their cooperative agreement; it is non-randomized. Thus, every child of eligible grade and age in the state did not have a chance of being included in the data collection (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013).

The main YRBSS data set used to assess the risk of housing instability was obtained through a data request to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. School district data supporting the YRBSS dataset was obtained through a request to the California Department of Education YRBSS data manager. The technical manuscripts for the data set were reviewed by the researcher. As the data set is openly available, both have been used in prior studies. In the case of the YRBSS, data collection centers around census-like surveying for basic recording of public health related behaviors. The data is not collected for the purpose of any specific initial analysis. The data sources include only non-experimental descriptive data. An agreement for the responsible use of that YRBSS data was signed by the researcher.

Table 1

Study Sample

Demographic Question	Response Categories	N	%
School District Site	Los Angeles	175	25.6%
	Oakland	507	74.2%
Race	White	215	31.50%
	Black	467	68.40%
Sexual Orientation	Heterosexual	566	82.90%
	Gay or Lesbian	14	2%
	Bisexual	57	8.30%
	Not Sure	37	5.40%
Housing Instability	In my parent or guardian's home	640	93.70%
	In the home of a friend, family member or other person because I had to leave my home	25	3.70%
	In a shelter or emergency housing	2	0.30%
	In a motel or hotel	4	0.60%

Table 1 (*continued*)

Demographic Question	Response Categories	N	%
Housing Instability	In a car, park, campground, or other public place	3	0.40%
	I do not have a usual place to sleep	2	0.30%
	Somewhere else	5	0.90%

Measures

The YRBSS assesses risk via eight domains: behaviors that contribute to unintentional injuries and violence; sexual behaviors related to unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, including HIV infection; alcohol and other drug use; tobacco use; unhealthy dietary behaviors; inadequate physical activity; obesity, weight and weight control; and other health topics (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). YRBSS data collection is fixed, meaning that both the design of the survey and the locations for administration were predetermined before the collection began (Mertens, 2019). The current study is also fixed because it samples responses from that fixed data. The YRBSS data used for this study was collected in California classrooms in 2017. Individual YRBSS respondents provided data only once per administration. Survey procedures protected students' privacy, participation was anonymous and voluntary, and local procedures were followed to obtain and review parental consent (Smith-Grant et al, 2022). These surveys are conducted biennially in odd-numbered years among representative samples of high school and middle school students (Underwood et al, 2020).

All 110 of the survey items are multiple choice and operate on Likert-style scales with the exception of demographic questions. Eighty-nine questions are part of the standardized nationwide administration of the YRBSS. While the YRBSS provides a standard questionnaire

for each survey cycle, state and local agencies conducting it in their jurisdiction can modify this questionnaire to address their needs (Smith-Grant et al, 2022).The reliability and validity of each individual question on the questionnaire are not tested on consistent basis, but the overall measure has been found to be statistically reliable by multiple studies (Underwood et al, 2020).

The California Department of Education aggregated all self-reported YRBSS data on the basis of the school districts in which they were collected. Neither the California Department of Education nor the CDC maintain records of the originating county or school for respondent surveys. This is done to prevent potentially unforeseen negative impacts of that data's release. However, four districts within the state of California submitted individual district level data from their 2017 YRBSS administrations. This data is housed by the CDC and accessible for common use. For a summary of how each of this study's case variables and their response options are defined in the YRBSS survey please see Table 2 below.

Table 2

Study Measures

Item Label	Response Option
Variable: *Race* Question 5: What is your race?	1. American Indian or Alaska Native 2. Asian 3. Black or African American 4. Hispanic or Latino 5. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander 6. White
Variable: *Sexual Orientation* Question 65: Which of the following best describes you?	1. Heterosexual (straight) 2. Gay or lesbian 3. Bisexual 4. Not sure
Variable: *Housing instability* Question 109: During the past 30 days, where did you usually sleep?	1. In my parent's or guardian's home

Table 2 (*continued*)

Variable: *Housing instability* Question 109: During the past 30 days, where did you usually sleep?	2. In the home of a friend, family member, or other person because I had to leave my home or my parent or guardian cannot afford housing 3. In a shelter or emergency housing 4. In a motel or hotel 5. In a car, park, campground, or other public place 6. I do not have a usual place to sleep 7. Somewhere else

The primary variables measured in this study were: race, sexual orientation, housing instability. Race, sexual orientation, and housing instability were all found in self-reported items on the 2017 administration of the California YRBSS. For this study housing instability was treated as the dependent variable for both cases while race, sexual orientation, and school district attendance were treated as independent variables. In the study sample, race was restricted to Black or White – the primary focus of the study – with all other races excluded. Sexual orientation was treated dichotomously, as non-LGBTQ or LGBTQ. Housing status was treated dichotomously, as housing insecure or not. The questions used to ascertain the values for the variables studied and their coding for analysis are as follows:

Variable: *Housing instability*

Question: During the past 30 days, where did you usually sleep?

Answers: (1.) In my parent's or guardian's home (2.) In the home of a friend, family member, or other person because I had to leave my home or my parent or guardian cannot afford housing (3.) In a shelter or emergency housing (4.) In a motel or hotel (5.) In a car, park, campground, or other public place (6.) I do not have a usual place to sleep (7.) Somewhere else

Coding/Analysis Values: Item (1.) qualifies as *housing stability* = 1

Items (2.), (3.), (4.), (5.), (6.), and (7.) qualify as *housing instability* = 0

Variable: *Race*

Question: What is your race?

Answers: (1.) American Indian or Alaska Native (2.) Asian (3.) Black or African American (4.) Hispanic or Latino (5.) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (6.) White

Coding/Analysis Values: This item allows for multiple selections. Any response with the selection Black or African American will be qualified as *Black*. Any response with a selection of White without the additional selection of another racial grouping will be qualified as *White*. *Black* = 0, *White* = 1

Variable: *Sexual Orientation*

Question: Which of the following best describes you?

Answers: (1.) Heterosexual (straight) (2.) Gay or lesbian (3.) Bisexual (4.) Not sure

Coding/Analysis Values: For the purposes of this study, any respondents self-identifying as Gay, Lesbian, or Bisexual will be categorized in the inclusive *LGBTQ+*.

LGBTQ+ = 0, *Heterosexual* = 1

Primary exclusionary criteria for a participant's data in the present study include failure to complete the *homelessness i*tem on the YRBSS that measures the variable being explored. Race was the secondary exclusionary criteria with stratified sampling being used to select only those students who identified as Black or White for data inclusion in the sampling frame. Stratification in this instance is the division of the population sample by relevant characteristics, (e.g. age, grade, gender, race), differing in important ways to draw conclusions based on

representation (Treiman, 2009). The researcher acknowledges that interethnic adolescents who selected the corresponding YRBSS demographic item for race may also identify as Black or White.

There was no systematic exclusion of any type of groups of participants who met the final study inclusion criteria. The districts of Los Angeles and Oakland report 1,409 and 1,971 respondents respectively. Of those 3,380 students 2,940 answered the item on housing instability. The final number of respondents to the YRBSS housing instability items who met the necessary criteria for the study totaled 683 (N=683). These individuals represent participant level data only and full community level data of this sample were not obtained. The data was cleaned by the CDC. Few instances of exclusion because of data incompletion led to the removal of participant surveys from the final data sets of the CDC's initial collection for the purposes of "quality control" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

In the present study, listwise deletion was employed to remove survey respondents who met the general inclusion criteria but failed to answer all the necessary items for inclusion of their case. This was a minimal number of students and the decision was made not to employ imputation to fill these missing values. A total of eight respondents from the initial CDC collection were excluded for failure to respond to the sexual identification item.

Examples of participant variables in the present study that may remain fluid include race and sexual orientation. Student racial identities can be affected by limited knowledge of familial background or by personal identification choices. Student sexual orientations and gender identities may also be non-developed or in flux (Underwood et al, 2020). It is also possible that a student may also be unaware of the terminology regarding their specific sexual orientation (Underwood et al, 2020).

Despite the potential for occurrences like identity growth or change, the general belief held by the CDC is that the items found on the YRBSS adequately measure the underlying concepts. As such, there have been no CDC studies examining item validity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). However, studies have been conducted to assess the consistency in measurement for some items resulting in some changes since the inception of the survey (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). Given the duration of the YRBSS' implementation, these studies of its reliability to test for consistency were necessary to encapsulate changes to the constructs of adolescent lived experiences over decades such as changes in personal identification. This is critical in long-standing measures employing self-reporting (Treiman, 2009). While the YRBSS is unable to detect individual instances of overreporting and underreporting, the findings of the aforementioned studies' test-retest analysis suggest that the overall reliability for the YRBSS is good (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; Underwood et al, 2020). Internal-consistency reliability among the items clustered within each of the eight health topics explored in the measure demonstrate significant correlation (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013). Despite these findings, ongoing modifications to further improve the YRBSS and complete testing to update the national questionnaire's reliability continue (Underwood et al, 2020)

For the purpose of gathering descriptive data that paints a broad economic picture of the city or county each of the school districts is located in, the study employed information from the Economic Innovation Group's (EIG) Distressed Community Index (DCI). The EIG's DCI was created using community economic data that was aggregated and projected from varying U.S. census sources collected from 2012 to 2017 (Economic Innovation Group, n.d.). The DCI utilizes seven complimentary socioeconomic metrics to examine U.S. Census data related to

economic outcomes in populations which include: possession of high school diploma, local poverty rate, adult unemployment, housing vacancy rates, median household income, number of available jobs, and the number of local businesses (Economic Innovation Group, n.d.). This makes the collected data and community index scores an approximation or generalization of community socioeconomics for the corresponding school districts based on their city or county. Index scores are a community's percentile rank from the combination of all seven metrics. Rankings from each of the seven metrics are averaged and weighted equally to create the initial score. That score is normalized into a final score on an ascending scale of 0 to 100. Based on those metrics the communities are assigned into five tiers: prosperous, comfortable, mid-tier, at-risk, and distressed (Economic Innovation Group, n.d.). The data from the DCI used in the study were projected to be applicable to the year 2017 by the EIG. Comparison for the purpose of direct measurement of variables' impacts on individual participants in either of the explored cases is not possible given the nature of the data sets used. It is also not possible to link the generalized community economic picture provided by the DCI to individualized participants in either of the cases.

Other Data Sources

Qualitative data that addresses some of the housing instability response efforts seen in areas that contain the LAUSD and OUSD was gathered via the use of online journal articles and publicly available websites or databases. The housing response effort data describes non-numerical characterizations of community homelessness interventions. This information is used in tandem with quantitative statistics that contain information like state homelessness data, county homelessness data, city homelessness data, school district data homeless data, county economic data, city economic data, etc. The distinctions of this data are relevant because OUSD

is contained in the singular city of Oakland within Alameda County, but LAUSD serves the eighty-eight cities within Los Angeles County as well as parts of 31 municipalities and unincorporated regions in Southern California. Factors like landmass and population differentials may be relevant to resources and response levels. Resources that maintain relevant data include charitable organizations, social services, school districts, county government resources, city government resources, state and local policies, etc.

Table 3

Community Homelessness Response Source Examples

Institution Name	Institutional Website
California Department of Housing and Community Development	https://www.hcd.ca.gov/project-homekey
Conrad N. Hilton Foundation	https://www.hiltonfoundation.org/programs/homelessness
First to Serve	https://www.firsttoserve.org
HOPICS	https://www.hopics.org
The Midnight Mission	https://www.midnightmission.org
City of Oakland Rent Adjustment Program	https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/rent-adjustment-program
Coalition on Homelessness	https://www.cohsf.org
U.S. Department of HUD	https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/coc/faqs
Kaiser Permanente	https://about.kaiserpermanente.org
East Oakland Collective	https://www.eastoaklandcollective.com
Homeless Action Center	https://www.homelessactioncenter.org
Operation Dignity	https://www.operationdignity.org

Data Analysis

Quantitative Contextual Data: Descriptive

This quantitative secondary data analysis employed descriptive statistics to demonstrate basic differences in the hypotheses regarding the variables of race, sexual orientation, housing instability and school district. To quantify and explore the number of individual cases from the data set that were of interest due to sufficiently answering the housing instability item in the YRBSS administration, the data set was fed into SPSS v. 28. A codebook was created to make sure that all the variables fed into the software were consistent and easily identifiable. The choice to use cross-tabulation, Fisher exact tests, and chi-square analysis, specifically, to explore this secondary dataset is appropriate given the need to examine the independent variables within a dependent variable that can be expressed dichotomously (Treiman, 2009). Moreover, the need to examine the phenomenon of interest in a large enough sample to validate statistical significance without the ability to conduct primary data collection is solved by secondary data analysis (Wickham, 2019). Furthermore, because the research aimed to examine the reports of adolescents experiencing housing insecurity, secondary data analysis is employed to prevent the overburdening of this already sensitive and vulnerable population that can also be difficult to identify (Wickham RJ, 2019).

There also exists causal inference regarding patterns within related data from studies exploring one or more of these subjects contained in the variables. In this study the cross-tabulations, Fisher exact tests, and chi-square were leveraged to explore prevalence and better understand any relationships or patterns between the combinations of variables (Gay et al., 2009; Treiman, 2009). The cross-tabulations helped analyze the interaction between the categorical variables by allowing for ease in the display of their distribution in a table format. By organizing

data into a table, patterns and data trends were easier to detect for simple comparisons between the different categories of the variables. This was particularly helpful as the YRBSS information was coded into demographic groups (e.g., race, sexual orientation, housing instability) (Treiman, 2009). The crosstabs show the frequency distribution of variables in terms of how often each combination of categories occurred in the dataset. Cross-tabulations were also used in the chi-square test to assess whether the observed relationships between the variables was statistically significant or due to chance.

The chi-square test of independence was used to test the hypothesis which determined if there was association between the variables in both school districts. The test was particularly useful because the data was categorical. The Fisher exact test, and chi-square test of independence were used to analyze how frequently observations fell into different categories across variables (Treiman, 2009). The Fisher exact test can be used in the analysis of cross tabulations with small sample sizes. The Chi-square test can be used to compare the observed frequencies in each category to the frequencies expected if there were no relationship under the assumption of independence (Treiman, 2009). A large difference between observed and expected frequencies can suggest whether or not the variables are related. The resulting p-value from the test helps determine whether the relationship observed in the sample data is statistically significant, in this case to the 0.05 value (Treiman, 2009). Subsequent descriptive statistics and relevant tables regarding this information can be found in chapter 4.

Figure 5

Analysis used for Research Questions

	Fisher Exact Test	Chi Square Test
Cross Tabulations	1.a	1.b

1.a Within each school district (case), how is the prevalence of self-reported adolescent housing instability in California related to racial identity and sexual orientation?

1.b Across cases, how is the prevalence of self-reported adolescent housing instability in California related to racial identity, sexual orientation, and school district location?

2.a Within each school district (case), what are the characteristics of local community economic distress and housing instability response efforts?

2.b Across cases, how do local community economic distress and housing instability response efforts compare?

Qualitative Contextual Data: Descriptive

Descriptive qualitative contextual data refers to information gathered in a study that provides insight into the environment, background, and conditions surrounding the subject or phenomenon being studied. This type of data helps researchers and the public understand the "context" or setting in which behaviors, interactions, or processes occur, offering deeper insight beyond the individual or isolated variables (Gay et al., 2009). Contextual data includes details about the environment, culture, or background that may influence the subject. In the case of the present study of homelessness, contextual data involves understanding the socio-economic conditions of the city or county, the availability of social services, and manifestations of attitudes toward homelessness in the community as demonstrated by interventions. That contextual data also involves institutional settings in which the data was collected, the school districts. By acknowledging the broader environment, the study ensures that interpretations are grounded in the actual circumstances of the individual YRBSS participants (Gay et al., 2009). Qualitative data collected for this study primarily consisted of the description and characterization of

homelessness response efforts by state and local governments as well as private institutions as seen on their webpages.

Cross-Case Analysis

In this study cross-case analysis was used to identify potential patterns and understand differences between the LAUSD and OUSD cases in order to gain insight into the different contexts of the cases. Recurring themes in interventions or policy may not have been evident from analyzing a single case. Differences between the cases may highlight unique factors or contexts affecting their homeless populations and lead to an enhanced understanding of the conditions under which homelessness occurs. Comparing the interventions in each case may reveal district-specific challenges or practices that are widespread. Cross-case analysis in this study enhances the validity of the research by confirming that findings in one case are not idiosyncratic but are instead consistent across multiple contexts. That helped in the reduction of risk of bias or misinterpretation by ensuring that the conclusions were supported by evidence from both cases.

Validity and Reliability

In both quantitative and qualitative research, reliability and validity are crucial to the integrity of the findings (Yin, 2018). Validity refers to the accuracy of the data or measure used and reliability refers to consistency of the data or measure used (Treiman, 2009). Formal statistical validity and reliability of the DCI has not been directly tested (Economic Innovation Group, n.d.). As the information gathered by the EIG is simple aggregation and reporting of forms of population data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau, the present study operated under the assumption that this collection is consistent and accurate. Both the YRBSS and Economic Innovative Group distress raw data are gathered through publicly funded and governmentally

executed surveys. The data is publicly available, de-identified, and lacks any means to tie sensitive information to any individual (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013; Economic Innovation Group, n.d.). Thus, the data does not require secure storage. The district level data managers for the YRBSS and the EIG data managers were contacted regarding potential differences between public use data sets and restricted use data sets. Neither group reported differences in their data sets.

Since 1990, data collection for YRBSS has occurred biennially in odd numbered years among representative samples of middle and high school students. In California, the data collection method is a 45-minute, 110-item survey. The survey is self-administered, and responses are collected anonymously on a paper-based form that is scanned into a computer (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). The data is then compiled by the district and de-identified before submission to the CDC where it will be weighted and added to the national data set. During the 2017 administration, the CDC required a sixty percent response rate or greater for a responding jurisdiction to be weighted. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018; Underwood et al, 2020).

A total of twenty-one large school districts were weighted in the 2017 YRBSS administration including Los Angeles and Oakland (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). Weighting for respondent's sex and race were applied to deal with nonresponses from schools and students Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). Weighting was equivalent to respondent populations per district or jurisdiction. Black and Hispanic students were nationally oversampled (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018); Underwood et al, 2020). However, it is worth noting that both Los Angeles and Oakland have Hispanic student

populations that far exceed national averages (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

In the CDC's national 2017 YRBSS administration weighting: 50.7% of the students were female; 53.5% were White; 13.4% were black; 22.8% were Hispanic; and 10.3% were (non-Hispanic) Indigenous, AAPI, or multiple race (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). A total of 85.4% of students self-identified as heterosexual, 2.4% self-identified as gay or lesbian, 8.0% self-identified as bisexual, and 4.2% were unsure of their sexual identity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). In the data collected from the twenty-one large urban school districts, 74.7%–88.4% of students self -identified as heterosexual, 1.7%–5.5% self-identified as gay or lesbian, 5.5%–11.9% self-identified as bisexual, and 3.3%–14.9% were unsure of their sexual identity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). State and district level weighting was matched to the demographic data for each area's respective group of students (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). As a result, the population sample size for weighting in the state of California was 1,778 with a 68% school response rate, a 98% student response rate, and an overall response rate of 61%. After weighting 25.7% of the sample population was White and 5.7% was Black (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

The Los Angeles student sample size was 1,409 students with a school response rate of 100%. The student response rate was 83% with an overall response rate of 83%. 8.8% of students were White and 8.6% of students were Black (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018). In Oakland the student sample size was 1,971 students with a school response rate of 100%. The student response rate was 67% with an overall response rate of 67%. 7.1% of students were White and 29.4% of students were Black (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

In Table 4 below, we also see that weighted self-reported sexual identities of those districts' students does not deviate widely from California state or U.S. national norms (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2018).

Table 4

YRBSS Sexual Orientation

SEXUAL IDENTITY

	Heterosexual (straight)			Gay or Lesbian			Bisexual			Not Sure		
	No.	%	CI*	No.	%	CI	No.	%	CI	No.	%	CI
Natl.	12,012	85.4	(84.1-86.6)	537	2.4	(1.9-2.9)	1,137	8.0	(7.2-9.0)	602	4.2	(3.6-4.8)
CA	1,523	87.2	(84.7-89.4)	46	2.6	(1.6-4.1)	127	6.8	(5.5-8.3)	63	3.4	(2.5-4.5)
LA	1,223	88.4	(85.6-90.7)	24	1.7	(1.0-3.1)	78	5.5	(3.8-7.8)	62	4.4	(3.2-6.1)
OAK	1,663	86.2	(84.3-87.9)	31	1.8	(1.1-2.8)	163	7.9	(6.7-9.1)	88	4.2	(3.4-5.2)

Note: Natl.: National CA: California LA: Los Angeles OAK: Oakland
No. : Sample size % : Percentage of Students CI : Confidence Interval
*95% confidence interval

Strengths and Limitations

The study utilized a trusted national survey with proven predictive strength, reliable survey items, and valid survey items. The study focus is novel given how few school districts included the "homelessness" question on their YRBSS surveys. The study also enhanced the scope of the data by attempting to look at individual and system-level data to gain a broader and comparative understanding regarding a specific need of vulnerable populations.

To explore the topic of the research study, broad data sets composed of multiple sources encapsulating information from an adequate volume of participants was necessary. In this instance, time and budget constraints made the collection of this data infeasible. Collection by the researcher could not have yielded the scope of government supported data collection. As such it was necessary to employ secondary data analysis.

One of the limitations of secondary data analysis is that it does not allow for any control over which variables were previously measured or how they were measured. This can limit the conclusions which can be drawn. The YRBSS uses convenience sampling, thus not every eligible school within every county in the state of California participates. As such, the data may be reflective of general population characteristics, but it is not comprehensively representative. The YRBSS is also subject to forms of bias like anything created by humans, despite being an objective tool refined over time (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013).

The overview of the distressed community index scores is broad. The data comprises averages, medians, and per capita reflections of county populations. While this may reflect the average economic standing for many, it cannot speak to the individual economic based experience of every adolescent and family. DCI information paints an overall picture of the comparative economic challenges of the counties in which the YRBSS was conducted. However, these generalized tiers do not take into consideration outliers in the form of extreme pockets of poverty or wealth which may possibly affect median household income and the property tax base per capita. As participants sampled were grouped by county and thus tier, the only means for gaining possible insight into individual perceptions of economic experience would be items on the YRBSS associated with economic stability. However, there would be no way to confirm

actual economic status. This study also assumes that adolescents who completed the YRBSS are attending schools in the counties in which they reside.

Neither data set takes into consideration cultural factors that might affect risk nor the concentration of population subgroupings which may exhibit varying forms within different counties. County distress ranking data does not include demographic information of counties' racial makeup. There may be disproportionate levels of racial representation per capita in the counties compared with available YRBSS data.

DCI distress data can contain racially diverse populations with economic stratification. Associated behaviors which go into calculating the risk measured by the YRBS may have different individualized impacts or outcomes depending on factors like income, culture, or race. Due to the de-identified nature of the YRBSS data set, individual participants cannot be identified and tracked over time. There are no means through observation of the data set to determine if a respondent has completed the survey more than once in a school career. As a result of this inability to track and compare individual student escalation or de-escalation of risk it was necessary to use cohorts in ascending years to test for fluctuations in gaps over time.

Despite the final weighting calculations for the district and national tabulations of the Los Angeles and Oakland data used, it is important to remember that a significant percentage of both school districts are Hispanic students. With Hispanic students comprising the majority of students in both districts, the choice not to explore the population may not give the best representative picture for students in either district. Though it is important to note that Hispanic and Latino students have the option to self-identify as either Black or White in combination with their Hispanic ethnicity on the YRBSS through two separate demographic items.

The study makes use of YRBSS data from the 2017 administration in order to take advantage of the related DCI data that only held projected relevance until the year 2018. However this study lacks any means by which to account for the specific evolving economic impacts of things like population growth, gentrification in cities like Oakland, and economic downturns. Despite the significant issue of poverty and homelessness in San Francisco populations, the study could not make use of students from the district because only Los Angeles and Oakland surveys had responses for the homelessness question in 2017. The economic wealth in the San Francisco area and San Diego areas would have made for richer analysis given the significant wealth disparities in those areas combined with other dynamics that feed potential rises in their local homeless populations.

Summary

The research explores historical disparities in housing instability among marginalized groups, focusing on the intersection of race, sexuality, and housing instability in California school districts. It aims to fill gaps in the literature by employing a descriptive quantitative case study approach to examine housing instability among Black and White adolescents in two California districts. The research was guided by the pragmatic worldview, acknowledging the social and political context of housing instability. This study combined quantitative and qualitative data collection to gain a comprehensive understanding of housing instability and the responses to it in the LAUSD and the OUSD. The study analyzes 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) survey data, using variables such as race, sexual orientation, and housing instability, and school district. The research design included cross-tabulations, Fisher exact test, and chi-square analysis to assess relationships between the variables. Qualitative contextual data from local economic and homelessness response efforts were also collected to

understand the broader context in which the housing instability occurs. Cross-case analysis between the Los Angeles and Oakland school districts was conducted to identify patterns and differences in housing instability responses, aiming to provide more robust conclusions and insights for future interventions.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

This chapter presents findings from the individual cases in the study and their cross-case analysis. YRBSS survey results and qualitative data regarding students from each of the examined school districts yielded relevant demographic data and information regarding social and governmental responses to housing instability. Homelessness in children underlies this study's research problem, and it is a known problem that proliferates beyond this study's school districts or state. The present study used quantitative and qualitative data to detail what demographics for housing unstable students in a specific context looks like and describe some of the known interventions in those areas. Both cases analyzed 2017 YRBSS data to determine relationships between the variables, describe currently available predictors to the dependent variable, and note the presence of any known disparities already witnessed in the current literature.

The factors that contribute to housing instability for any individual in the sample populations are ultimately unknown, but these individuals still exist within the context of their community. Homelessness is not simply an individualized problem; it is a problem within a societal context that allows people to be unhoused. That societal context is slightly buffered by local response efforts. This quantitative descriptive case study approach employed cross-tabulations, Fisher exact tests, and chi-square tests of independence to determine if known

disparities can be detected in the sample and assess similarities and differences between the cases.

Case 1: Los Angeles Unified School District

Research Question 1.a:

Within each school district (case), how is the prevalence of self-reported adolescent housing instability in California related to racial identity and sexual orientation? Research question one is designed to explore if there are relationships between the dependent variable of housing instability and the independent variables of race, sexual orientation, and school district. This began with a descriptive analysis of the district data set to draw a sample that met the basic inclusion criteria. For the 2017 administration of the YRBSS a total of 175 students from the LAUSD answered the housing instability question. Out of these 175 students 171 answered all three of the questions surrounding housing instability, racial identity, and sexual orientation necessary for inclusion in statistical analysis.

The students from the LAUSD were between the ages of twelve and eighteen years old. The overwhelming majority of the population in this case would be considered stably housed with (97 %) of students reporting living in their parents' home. While this general housing stability was seen across all groups, the percentages of the subgroupings within the sample reflect potential differences in populations. The majority grouping for housing stability was White heteronormative adolescents who comprised (49%) of the total case population. They were followed by their Black heteronormative counterparts who comprised (36%) of the case population. Black sexual minority youth also comprised less of the LAUSD sample (4%) as compared to their White counterparts who were (9%) of the sample. Five members of the LAUSD sample (3%) qualified as experiencing housing instability. Of that number, three were

White and heteronormative (1.8%), one was White and did not identify as heteronormative, and one was Black and did not identify as heteronormative. Within the group of housing unstable four of the five were housed at a friend or family member's home. The exception was a White heteronormative adolescent living in a shelter or emergency housing.

Table 5

Summary of Crosstabulations (LAUSD)

			Los Angeles	%
Parents home	White	Heteronormative	84	49.1
		Sexual Minority	10	5.8
		Unsure	5	2.9
	Black	Heteronormative	61	35.7
		Sexual Minority	3	1.8
		Unsure	3	1.8
Friend or family member home (left home)	White	Heteronormative	2	1.2
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0
		Unsure	1	0.6
	Black	Heteronormative	0	0.0
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0
		Unsure	1	0.6
Shelter or emergency housing	White	Heteronormative	1	0.6
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0
	Black	Heteronormative	0	0.0
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0

The data for this sample was taken from a broader district sample. As a result, the sample is relatively small. The number of individuals reporting housing instability within the population is also small. In order to examine the prevalence of housing instability in racial groups and the prevalence of housing instability in sexual orientation groups, a Fisher's exact test was completed. The Fisher exact test tests for the significance of the association between the classifications which, for this sample, have been collapsed into binary options for housing stability and race. Due to the available sample size the statistical significance of the relationship

between the variables was difficult to conclude (two-tailed $p = .649$). According to the Fisher exact test, there is also no significant relationship between sexual identity and housing instability in this case (two-tailed $p = .135$).

In summary, the LAUSD sample mirrors district demographics in that there was a greater representation of White students. Most students were stably housed, and White heteronormative students were the majority of the population. Most of the stably housed students were heteronormative. The greatest proportion of non-heteronormative identifying students were White. Of the students that were unhoused the majority were White, which may be attributed to the population differences in the sample. Statistical analysis yielded no evidence of significant relationships between individual racial identities and housing stability nor sexual identity and housing instability within the sample.

Research Question 2.a

Within each school district (case), what are the characteristics of local community economic distress and housing instability response efforts? The purpose of research question 2.a is to describe the characteristics of local community economic distress and the housing instability response efforts within the LAUSD. This information describes a broad economic picture of the county the district resides during the YRBSS data capture and local interventions which may have been active at the time or are currently active. These interventions take the form of: Los Angeles (LA) county legislation, policy, and funding; legislation, policy, ordinances, and funding in specified cities within LA County; local community policies, ordinances and funding mechanisms; as well as private response efforts, grassroots response efforts, and charitable funding sources.

Los Angeles County is home to one of the largest populations of housing compromised people in the United States, and the financial resources required to address homelessness in LA County are substantial. A 2023 Homeless Count conducted by the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority (LAHSA), projected that approximately 75,518 people were experiencing housing instability in the county (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2023). That was a significant increase from the previous year counts speculatively attributed to rising housing costs, economic instability, and the ongoing impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. The population is predominantly unsheltered, with nearly 70% of the housing unstable living on the streets, in cars, or in other locations not intended for human habitation (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority, 2023). Disparities are rampant with BIPOC, specifically Black people, who represent 34% of the homeless population but only 8% of the overall population in the county (Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative, 2023).

At the time of this study, EIG DCI data reports that Los Angeles County is considered a mid-tier county with a distress score of 43.3. It ranks 31st out of 58 counties in the state of California. Of the adults living in the county, 20% did not have a high school diploma. That is nine points higher than the national average (Economic Innovation Group, n.d.). The poverty rate for LA County is 13.9 %, that is 1.3% higher than the national average. Almost a quarter, 22.9%, of adults are not working, which is 1.6% higher than the national average. The housing vacancy rate is 5.7% which is a full two points below the national average for available housing. The median income ratio is 90.8%, that is over nine points below the national average. The national percentage change in the number of jobs over five years was a 2% loss. In LA County those who lost jobs more than doubled, 5% (Economic Innovation Group, n.d.). This point-in-time

economic snapshot of the county paints a vivid picture of the factors which feed the significant homelessness currently experienced.

The California Department of Education reports that of the 529,902 LAUSD students enrolled during the 2023-2024 academic year 11,310 of those students were homeless, 2% of the district's total population. During the 2022-2023 school year, the student population was higher with 538,295 students enrolled. During the 2022-2023 school year 9,410 students were reported as homeless. This means the district lost 8,393 students from its overall population between school years but saw an increase in the number of homeless students by 1,900. This data suggests that homelessness is trending upwards in the LAUSD.

To combat this homelessness there are differing and overlapping interventions at macro, county, and micro, local community, levels. At the county level there is Permanent supportive housing (PSH), a cornerstone of Los Angeles County's homelessness interventions. This housing model provides long-term rental assistance combined with supportive services for households with at least one individual, adults or children, with disabilities. As of 2023, over 35,000 PSH units have been created across the county, funded through various bond measures (LAHSA, 2023). Rapid re-housing (RRH) is another critical intervention aimed at reducing homelessness by providing short-term rental assistance and supportive services to help individuals and families quickly secure housing. LA County provides this service to 5,000 households receiving assistance annually. RRH programs in Los Angeles are targeted at diverse homeless populations including families, and women fleeing domestic violence with their children (LAHSA, 2023). These programs offer case management, employment support, and housing search assistance to facilitate long-term stability.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Los Angeles County launched Project Roomkey, an initiative that provided temporary housing in hotels and motels for vulnerable homeless individuals. Due to its success, Project Homekey was introduced as a statewide initiative, converting hotels, motels, and other properties into permanent housing. As of 2023, Project Homekey has created more than 3,000 housing units in Los Angeles County (California Department of Housing and Community Development, 2022). Early intervention efforts employed by the county like the Shallow Subsidy Program offer ongoing rental assistance to low-income families to prevent homelessness before it occurs (Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative, 2023).

County legislation addressing homelessness includes funding strategies and city ordinances. The funding to combat homelessness comes from a variety of sources, including local tax measures as well as state and federal grants. Measure H is one of the most significant funding initiatives for Los Angeles County. Measure H instituted a 0.25% sales tax increase to generate an estimated $355 million annually over ten years. One of the earmarks for this money is homelessness reduction with designs to increase permanent housing and fund homelessness prevention program (Los Angeles County Homeless Initiative, 2023). Complementing Measure H, Proposition HHH is a $1.2 billion bond measure that passed in 2016. Its primary goal is to fund the construction of up to 10,000 units of permanent supportive housing for homeless individuals over a 10-year period (Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department, 2023). Unlike Measure H, which funds services, Proposition HHH focuses primarily on the creation of new housing, specifically for people with overlapping vulnerabilities. The Los Angeles County General Fund also contributes to homelessness services by supplementing specific initiatives and programs. General fund dollars are used to fund

emergency shelters, and support county agencies involved in homelessness outreach efforts. (County of Los Angeles, 2023). Supplementing tax-based funding, foundations like the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and the Weingart Foundation have committed millions of dollars to fund supportive services, housing development, and research on homelessness solutions. These philanthropic contributions sometimes provide flexible funding that allows program piloting and fills in gaps left by public funding sources (Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, 2023; Weingart Center Association, 2023).

Other legislation includes controversial ordinances that deal with homelessness visibility. Several Los Angeles municipalities have enacted ordinances that criminalize certain behaviors associated with homelessness. Commonly referred to as "No Sit, No Sleep" ordinances, these policies prohibit sitting, lying down, or sleeping in public spaces during certain hours. In 2021 The Los Angeles City Council passed an ordinance restricting the areas where homeless encampments may exist, particularly near schools, parks, and shelters (Los Angeles Times, 2021). Ordinance No. 41.18 which designates certain public spaces as “no-camping” zones, was designed to limit the proliferation of homeless encampments in high-traffic areas while providing outreach services to assist those affected. While intended to address public health and safety, critics argue that these laws displace homeless individuals without providing adequate alternative housing or services (ACLU of Southern California, 2021).

The LAHSA is one of the primary resources for combating homelessness within the city and has city-county joint powers authority. One key intervention in Los Angeles is the Bridge Housing Program which provides temporary housing for individuals transitioning from street homelessness into permanent housing (LAHSA, 2023). The City of Los Angeles has enacted the Comprehensive Homelessness Strategy which serves as a blueprint for homelessness prevention,

rapid rehousing, and the creation of affordable housing. This strategy aligns with state mandates such as the California Housing Accountability Act and focuses on increasing the availability of affordable and supportive housing options (City of Los Angeles, 2023). The city also launched the A Bridge Home initiative as a short-term solution that includes multiple temporary housing sites throughout the city, creating interim housing units for unsheltered individuals (City of Los Angeles, 2023). Additionally, the city has embraced the Housing First model, which prioritizes providing permanent supportive housing without preconditions, followed by comprehensive wraparound services and employment support (Los Angeles City Council, 2023).

More localized response efforts come from Community-based organizations (CBOs) which have long been a cornerstone of the fight against homelessness in LA. These organizations are local and cater to the specific needs of marginalized populations, offering a holistic set of services to those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The People Concern is one such organization that provides housing, healthcare, mental health services, and domestic violence intervention to individuals across Los Angeles County. The People Concern addresses both immediate housing crises and long-term solutions with permanent supportive housing (The People Concern, 2023). Services Not Sweeps coalition is another grassroots effort that emerged in response to the criminalization of homelessness, particularly the practice of "sweeps" by local authorities, which involves forcibly removing homeless encampments. The movement, which includes a coalition of advocacy groups and individuals, campaigns for the redirection of resources from policing and punitive measures toward services such as healthcare, housing, and social support (Services Not Sweeps, 2023). Organizations like Street Watch LA, a partnership between the Los Angeles Tenants Union (LATU) and the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA-LA), advocate for the decriminalization of homelessness and conducts direct action to

support unhoused individuals. They focus on the housing rights of renters, particularly during times of displacement, and are heavily involved in opposing anti-homelessness ordinances that restrict public space use (Street Watch LA, 2023).

Numerous charitable organizations are involved in alleviating homelessness in Los Angeles as well. These charities not only provide essential services like food, shelter, and healthcare but also engage in advocacy and public education. One of the largest and most influential charities is The Midnight Mission, which has served the homeless population of Los Angeles since 1914. The organization offers a myriad of wrap-around services including emergency shelter and services related to the ability to retain employment and housing (The Midnight Mission, 2023). Union Rescue Mission (URM) is another critical charity addressing homelessness in Los Angeles. Located on Skid Row, URM provides emergency and long-term services, including meals, shelter, and medical care (Union Rescue Mission, 2023). Charities that address specific populations living within the LAUSD include efforts in places like Compton and Inglewood. In Compton, First to Serve provides services to those experiencing homelessness including emergency shelter, meals, and transitional housing, with a focus on helping individuals and families in South Los Angeles, including Compton (First to Serve, 2023). Inglewood's Homeless Outreach Program Integrated Care System (HOPICS) provides comprehensive services aimed at addressing homelessness, particularly among African American and Latinx communities. HOPICS offers housing assistance and mental health services. The organization also operates a street outreach team that engages with unsheltered individuals in the Inglewood area, providing immediate services and referrals to shelter and healthcare (HOPICS, 2023).

Case 2: Oakland Unified School District

Research Question 1.a

Within each school district (case), how is the prevalence of self-reported adolescent housing instability in California related to racial identity and sexual orientation? The second sample in the study examining relationships between the housing instability variable and the independent variables of race, sexual orientation, and school district came from the OUSD. When compiling the 507 eligible student samples from Oakland that answered the 2017 YRBSS housing instability item, four sample cases were deemed ineligible for statistical analysis due to failure to answer the sexual orientation item. Participating students from OUSD were between twelve and eighteen years of age. The overwhelming majority of the population in this district sample was stably housed with 470 (93 %) of students reporting living in their parent's home. The overwhelming majority of adolescents in this case, 398, were Black, making up 79% of the sample. Black students outnumber their White counterparts by two-to-one which is in keeping with the racial demographics of the district where Black students rank 2nd in population representation and White students rank 4th.

The heteronormative stably housed population made up (77%) of the overall sample with (61%) of respondents identifying as Black and (16%) Identifying as White. Of the (16%) of respondents who identified as sexual minorities that were stably housed (5%) were White and (11%) were Black. The remaining (7%) of the sample, who were considered housing unstable, were primarily Black and heteronormative students who made up almost (6%) of the total population. The overwhelming majority of these 18 students (4%) slept in the home of a friend or family member. Four Black hetero students slept in hotels or motels, four slept "somewhere else", two slept in a car or other public place, and one slept in a shelter or emergency housing. White heteronormative students made up less than (1%) of the entire population with one reporting living in a car or other public place and another reporting living "somewhere else". Of

the three non-heteronormative Black students that comprised (1%) of the total population, two reported that they did not have any place to sleep and the third reported sleeping at the home of a family member or friend. No non-heteronormative White students were housing unstable.

Table 6

Summary of Crosstabulations (OUSD)

			Oakland	%
Parents home	White	Heteronormative	79	15.7
		Sexual Minority	12	2.4
		Unsure	13	2.6
	Black	Heteronormative	308	61.2
		Sexual Minority	43	8.5
		Unsure	13	2.6
Friend or family member home (left home)	White	Heteronormative	0	0.0
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0
		Unsure	1	0.2
	Black	Heteronormative	18	3.6
		Sexual Minority	1	0.2
		Unsure	0	0.0
Shelter or emergency housing	White	Heteronormative	0	0.0
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0
	Black	Heteronormative	1	0.2
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0
Motel or hotel	White	Heteronormative	0	0.0
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0
	Black	Heteronormative	4	0.8
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0
Car, park, public place	White	Heteronormative	1	0.2
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0
	Black	Heteronormative	2	0.4
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0
		Heteronormative	0	0.0

Do not have a place	White	Sexual Minority	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0
	Black	Heteronormative	0	0.0
		Sexual Minority	2	0.4
		Unsure	0	0.0
Somewhere else	White	Heteronormative	1	0.2
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0
	Black	Heteronormative	4	0.8
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0

The data for the OUSD was taken from a larger district data set. The number of students in this sample was relatively large, however, the instances of reported housing instability within the population was small. The Fisher exact test was used to determine relationships between housing instability and race as well as housing instability and sexual identity. Here again, sample size presented difficulties in being able to determine relationships between the variables. Available data testing shows there was not a statistically significant relationship between race and housing instability in the sample (two-tailed $p = .143$). According to the Fisher exact test, there is also no significant relationship between sexual identity and housing instability in this case (two-tailed $p = .486$).

In summary, the OUSD sample mirrors district demographics in that there was a greater representation of Black students. However, the discrepancy between the sample's population of Black students and White students is proportionally larger than the discrepancy within the full OUSD student body. Most students were stably housed with Black heteronormative students making up the bulk of the population. The greatest proportion of housed non-heteronormative students were Black in keeping with the sample grouping population sizes. Of the students that were unhoused, the majority were Black, which may be attributed to the population differences in the sample. Statistical analysis yielded no evidence of significant relationships between

individual racial identities and housing stability nor sexual identity and housing instability within the case.

Research Question 2.a

Within each school district (case), what are the characteristics of local community economic distress and housing instability response efforts? OUSD is located in the city of Oakland which is in Alameda County. Located in the San Francisco Bay Area, Alameda County faces significant challenges in addressing homelessness due to high housing costs, income inequality, and a shortage of affordable housing. At the time of this study, EIG DCI data reports that Alameda County is considered a prosperous county with a distress score of 12.9. It ranks 6th out of 58 counties in the state of California. Of the adults living in the county, 11% did not have a high school diploma which is in keeping with the national average (Economic Innovation Group, n.d.). The poverty rate for Alameda County is 8.9 %, roughly 4 points lower than the national average. Only 18.7% of adults are not working, which is nearly 3% less than the national average. The housing vacancy rate is 5.1% which is a full two and a half points below the national average for available housing. The median income ratio is 133.2% of the national average. The national percentage change in the number of jobs over five years was a 2% loss. Alameda County experienced half a percentage point less job loss than the national average (Economic Innovation Group, n.d.). The economic prosperity in Alameda County belies the struggles of working-class individuals experiencing record increases in homelessness.

The California Department of Education reports that of the 45,086 students enrolled in the OUSD during the 2023-2024 academic year 2,449 of those students were homeless, 4% of the district's total population. This number is consistent with the previous academic year. While not the highest percentage of homeless students by district in the entire country, OUSD's

percentage is high considering the concentration of wealth in the county and relatively small population size. The Alameda County Homelessness Action Plan serves as the county's guiding document for addressing homelessness, outlining strategies to increase affordable housing, expand supportive services, and prevent homelessness. Alameda County's Health Care Services Agency leads the initiative, collaborating with local cities, non-profit organizations, and public health services to provide a cohesive response (Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, 2023). One key program is Home Stretch, which is part of the broader county strategy to coordinate housing resources for individuals with complex needs. Home Stretch connects those experiencing homelessness with permanent supportive housing by matching them with available units based on their vulnerability level (Alameda County Housing and Community Development Department, 2023).

Alameda County has invested heavily in eviction prevention and emergency housing resources, particularly in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. An example of this is the county's Housing Secure program which provides legal aid and emergency rental assistance to tenants at risk of eviction. The program is designed to prevent homelessness by ensuring tenants are aware of their rights and have access to financial assistance to avoid displacement (East Bay Community Law Center, 2023). Another notable resource is the Winter Shelter Program, which operates during the cold months and provides temporary emergency shelter to individuals and families who are unhoused. This program works in tandem with other shelter initiatives, such as the Operation Dignity initiative, which offers short-term shelter options for veterans and their families (Operation Dignity, 2023).

Alameda County has adopted a Housing First approach, which prioritizes placing individuals and families into permanent housing without preconditions, such as sobriety or

employment. The Everyone Home coalition coordinates this approach, focusing on creating more permanent supportive housing units throughout the county (Everyone Home, 2023). Building Futures with Women and Children is another organization supporting the Housing First model by providing transitional and permanent supportive housing options for women and families escaping domestic violence. Their services include not only shelter but also case management, mental health services, and assistance with obtaining permanent housing (Building Futures, 2023). Abode Services, is another one of the county's largest providers of supportive housing, integrates healthcare services into its housing programs providing on-site medical and mental health services (Abode Services, 2023).

The Coalition for Justice and Accountability is a county grassroots effort advocating for the rights of those experiencing homelessness, particularly by challenging policies that criminalize poverty. This coalition works with legal advocacy groups to ensure that laws around public space use, such as anti-camping ordinances, do not unduly target vulnerable and unhoused populations (Coalition for Justice and Accountability, 2023). Alameda County Community Food Bank provides meals and food assistance to individuals and families experiencing homelessness, which is critical to the well-being of vulnerable children and adults (Alameda County Community Food Bank, 2023). Another important charitable CBO for the county is St. Mary's Center, which offers services specifically tailored to older adults and families experiencing homelessness. St. Mary's provides transitional housing, health care, and case management services to help people transition into stable, permanent housing (St. Mary's Center, 2023).

To address homelessness at the county level, Alameda makes use of various legislation and policies including Measure A1. Passed by voters in 2016, this $580 million bond measure was devised to create affordable housing and address homelessness across the county. Funding

from Measure A1 is being used to develop new affordable housing units, rehabilitate existing properties, and provide assistance to first-time homebuyers. The measure was pivotal in ensuring that resources were allocated to prevent homelessness and provide long-term housing solutions (Alameda County Housing and Community Development, 2023). Alameda County also participates in the Homeless Emergency Aid Program (HEAP), a $500 million block grant aimed at helping local governments address immediate homelessness needs. This money has been used to expand shelter capacity, provide emergency rental assistance, and increase outreach services. The flexibility of HEAP funding has allowed the county to tailor its response to the specific needs of its unhoused population (California Homeless Coordinating and Financing Council, 2023).

Another important legislative measure impacting homelessness in Alameda County is California's No Place Like Home (NPLH) initiative. NPLH dedicates funding from Proposition 2 (approved in 2018) to create permanent supportive housing for individuals with mental health needs who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. Alameda County has leveraged NPLH funds to develop supportive housing projects that offer wraparound services, including mental health and substance abuse treatment (California Department of Housing and Community Development, 2023). Other legislative responses within Alameda County include tenant protection ordinances to address housing insecurity and prevent homelessness. These ordinances are critical for keeping individuals and families in their homes, especially in a housing market with rapidly rising rents (City of Oakland Rent Adjustment Program, 2023). Oakland's Just Cause for Eviction Ordinance prevents landlords from evicting tenants without a legally recognized reason. This policy is designed to protect renters from arbitrary evictions, thereby reducing the risk of homelessness (Oakland Just Cause Ordinance, 2023).

Regarding non-legislated funding Alameda County has made significant financial commitments from its general fund to support homelessness services. Each fiscal year, the county allocates a portion of its budget toward emergency shelters, outreach programs, and supportive services (Alameda County Homeless Action Plan, 2023). Alameda also makes use of Continuum of Care (CoC) and Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) funds administered by HUD to support a range of services aimed at preventing and reducing homelessness, including permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, and outreach programs (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2023).

At the city level, Oakland's Measure KK is a $600 million bond measure designed to improve the city's infrastructure and address affordable housing issues. Of the total amount, $100 million is allocated for affordable housing projects, including homelessness prevention initiatives. This funding has been used to build and preserve affordable housing units, as well as provide support for transitional and supportive housing programs for those experiencing homelessness (City of Oakland, 2023). Complementing the Just Cause Ordinance employed at the county level, Oakland's Tenant Protection Ordinance (TPO) expands tenant rights by preventing harassment from landlords against intimidation tactics that could force tenants out of their homes. This safeguards renters in a competitive market from actions that could otherwise contribute to homelessness, such as illegal rent increases, denial of repairs, or verbal threats (City of Oakland, 2023).

Oakland introduced a controversial Homeless Encampment Management Policy in 2020. This ordinance allows for the regulation of homeless encampments within city limits and prohibited encampments in specific areas such as near schools, parks, and critical infrastructure. The policy includes provisions for offering housing and services before disbanding

encampments, but arguably disproportionately targets the unhoused without providing adequate long-term housing solutions (Oakland City Council, 2023). In an effort to provide immediate relief to some of the affected, Oakland has established Temporary Homeless Shelter Sites. These sites, commonly referred to as "Tuff Shed" sites, offer temporary shelter in converted sheds while individuals are connected to services (City of Oakland, 2023).

The city has also recognized the growing number of individuals and families living in vehicles. Oakland has implemented a Safe Parking Program that provides designated areas where people can park and sleep safely. These areas also offer access to basic services, such as sanitation, and connect participants with social services that can help them transition into more stable housing (City of Oakland, 2023). To address this widespread homelessness, Oakland has adopted a Housing First approach, which prioritizes providing permanent housing to homeless individuals without preconditions. The city has invested in permanent supportive housing that combines housing with intensive wraparound services, such as mental health treatment, substance use support, and employment assistance (California Department of Housing and Community Development, 2023).

To fund homelessness response efforts the city of Oakland passed a local funding initiative, Measure W. This measure imposes a tax on vacant properties in Oakland, generating approximately $10 million annually earmarked specifically for homelessness services, affordable housing development, and other programs targeting housing instability (City of Oakland, 2023). Oakland also passed Measure Q, a parcel tax that generates revenue for homeless services, public parks, and other essential city services. These tax generated funds are critical in supporting the expansion of emergency shelters and the provision of rapid re-housing services (City of Oakland, 2023). The City of Oakland General Fund is also a significant source of revenue for

homelessness services. A portion of the city's general budget is allocated to funding emergency shelters, outreach programs, and transitional housing (City of Oakland, 2023).

In addition to public funding, Oakland's efforts to address homelessness have been bolstered by charitable contributions from the private sector. Kaiser Permanente has pledged millions of dollars to support housing stability and homelessness prevention efforts in Oakland. These funds are often used to support permanent supportive housing developments and homelessness prevention services, such as rent subsidies for low-income residents (Kaiser Permanente, 2023). Other private foundations, such as the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative and the San Francisco Foundation, have also contributed significant amounts of funding toward homelessness initiatives in Oakland. These philanthropic organizations focus on addressing the root causes of homelessness, such as affordable housing shortages and systemic inequality, by providing grants to local nonprofits and service providers (San Francisco Foundation, 2023).

CBOs working to stem Oakland homelessness include the East Oakland Collective (EOC). The EOC is a grassroots organization focusing on supporting underserved populations, including unhoused individuals in Oakland. The EOC advocates for long-term housing solutions and equitable development in East Oakland to ensure that marginalized communities are not displaced (East Oakland Collective, 2023). Their work is supported by donations, local partnerships, and volunteers. Operation Dignity is a veteran-focused nonprofit that provides emergency, transitional, and permanent housing for homeless individuals, with a special emphasis on veterans and their families. This charity offers comprehensive case management services, including housing assistance, mental health support, and access to employment resources (Operation Dignity, 2023). The Homeless Action Center (HAC) focuses on securing benefits like Social Security, Medi-Cal, and disability assistance for homeless clients. In doing so

the HAC helps individuals access the resources needed to secure stable housing. They are funded through a combination of public funds and private donations (Homeless Action Center, 2023).

Cross-Case Analysis of Qualitative and Quantitative Results

The purpose of this study was to find out if relationships exist between race, sexual orientation, school district, and housing instability in adolescents. The within-case analysis responding to questions 1.a and 2.a provided detailed information regarding the relationship of these factors within the LAUSD and OUSD, separately. Findings regarding each district's individual YRBSS participant demographic information and the district's homelessness response efforts paint the picture of two very distinct urban population centers. The purpose of questions 1.b and 2b. was to explore similarities and differences seen across the two districts.

LAUSD and OUSD were the two California districts chosen for secondary data analysis because they are the only two districts within the state to answer the YRBSS homelessness question. Los Angeles Unified serves roughly 538,000 students, the overwhelming majority, (75%), being of Hispanic descent and not being classified as homeless by the district. White and Black students comprise the second and third largest populations respectively which combined account for less than a quarter of the student population. At the time of this study 2% of the district students were considered homeless, the majority of them being non-White Hispanic. According to the California Department of Education, 83.5% of LA County homeless students were living with friends or family, 6.1% were living in temporary shelters, 5.8% were living in hotels or motels, and 4.6% were temporarily unhoused during the 2022-2023 school year.

The OUSD was also primarily BIPOC with Hispanic students making up nearly half of their student body. However, the district's Black student population is double that of their white counterparts. The county containing OUSD had a 4% student homelessness rate during the 2022-

2023 school year. Of those housing destabilized students, 75% were living with family or friends, 12.6% lived in temporary shelters, 7% lived in hotels and motels, and 4.7% were temporarily unsheltered.

Questions 1.b and 2.b looked at subgroups of these populations who took the survey in either of the districts to determine if disparities existed between the examined samples according to the differing economic pictures of the district's corresponding counties and local homelessness response efforts. Cross-case analysis was conducted to identify any similarities or differences across the cases and describe what they are. Cross-case analysis was also used to contextualize those differences within the community-based response efforts.

Research Question 1.b

Across cases, how is the prevalence of self-reported adolescent housing instability in California related to racial identity, sexual orientation, and school district location? The purpose of question 1.b was to identify any similarities or differences between the independent variables and housing instability across both school districts. For the 2017 administration of the YRBSS a total of 674 combined LAUSD and OUSD students answered the housing instability question and all the demographic questions necessary for analysis. The majority of respondents, 503, were from OUSD which was more than double the population in the LAUSD case. All of the students were between the ages of twelve and eighteen years old. Despite significant numbers of unhoused students in both cases, the overwhelming majority of students were stably housed, living in a parent or guardian's home.

Though the populations examined excluded the majority ethnic group in both districts, the percentage of homeless students in each district is relatively close to the district wise percentage reported by the state department of education. The LAUSD sample had (3%) of its

students unhoused while the OUSD sample had (7%) of its students unhoused. These sample percentages are contextualized by disproportionate populations, LAUSD maintains a student count over six times that of OUSD. The majority grouping for housing stability in Los Angeles was White and heteronormative while the majority grouping for Oakland was Black and heteronormative.

Non-heteronormative students made up (16%) of the OUSD case sample as compared to (14.1%) of the LAUSD sample. White sexual minorities had greater representation in LA and Black sexual minorities had greater representation in Oakland consistent with population representation in each sample. There was a combined total of five unhoused sexual minorities across cases. OUSD had no unhoused White sexual minorities whereas LAUSD had only one Black unhoused sexual minority. Most unhoused students were heteronormative and in keeping with the racial composition of their respective samples.

There was more diversity in housing instability representation within the OUSD sample as opposed to the LAUSD sample; this might be explained by the significantly higher number of OUSD homelessness cases. In keeping with their county representation as reported by the state, the majority of students experiencing homelessness reported staying with another family member or friend. However, the LAUSD case only had one student staying in an alternative setting, a homeless shelter. OUSD had students that slept in shelters, motels, public spaces, or reported having nowhere to sleep at all.

Table 7

Summary of Crosstabulations Between Cases (LAUSD and OUSD)

			Los Angeles	%	Oakland	%
Parents home	White	Heteronormative	84	12.5	79	11.7
		Sexual Minority	10	1.5	12	1.8
		Unsure	5	0.7	13	1.9

	Black	Heteronormative	61	9.1	308	45.7
		Sexual Minority	3	0.4	43	6.4
		Unsure	3	0.4	13	1.9
Friend or family member home (left home)	White	Heteronormative	2	0.3	0	0.0
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0	0	0.0
		Unsure	1	0.1	1	0.1
	Black	Heteronormative	0	0.0	18	2.7
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0	1	0.1
		Unsure	1	0.1	0	0.0

Table 7 (*continued*)

			Los Angeles	%	Oakland	%
Shelter or emergency housing	White	Heteronormative	1	0.1	0	0.0
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Black	Heteronormative	0	0.0	1	0.1
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0
Motel or hotel	White	Heteronormative	0	0.0	0	0.0
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Black	Heteronormative	0	0.0	4	0.6
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0
Car, park, public place	White	Heteronormative	0	0.0	1	0.1
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Black	Heteronormative	0	0.0	2	0.3
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0
Do not have a place	White	Heteronormative	0	0.0	0	0.0
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Black	Heteronormative	0	0.0	0	0.0
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0	2	0.3
		Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0
Somewhere else	White	Heteronormative	0	0.0	1	0.1
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Black	Heteronormative	0	0.0	4	0.6
		Sexual Minority	0	0.0	0	0.0
		Unsure	0	0.0	0	0.0

Fisher exact tests run with LAUSD and OUSD samples revealed no significant association between race and housing instability. According to the tests, there was also no statistically significant relationship between sexual identity and housing either. To analyze the variables across cases, Pearson chi-square tests of independence were conducted. No relationship was found between sexual orientation and any of the other variables; however, the relationship with race came close to significance across the two samples ($N = 674$) = 3.58, $p = .058$. However, a relationship was found between the school district and race ($N = 674$) = 92.01, $p = < .001$, as well as school district and housing instability ($N = 674$) = 4.44, $p = .035$.

Table 8

Summary of Chi-Square Analysis of Housing Instability Between Cases (LAUSD and OUSD)

	Housing Instability		
	χ^2	*df*	*sig.*
District	4.44	1	.04*
Race	3.23	1	.07
Sexual Orientation	.03	1	.86
	Race		
	χ^2	*df*	*sig.*
District	92.006	1	.00*
Housing Instability	3.23	1	.06
Sexual Orientation	3.58	1	.07

Note. N= 682. *$p < .05$.

Research Question 2.b

Across cases, how do local community economic distress and housing instability response efforts compare? Question 2.b was intended to describe the economic differences between the two counties represented by the districts. It was also intended to describe any

similarities or differences between response efforts to address homelessness in both counties. What the EIG DCI data showed is that Los Angeles County, home to LAUSD, has a general population that faces significantly greater economic distress than OUSD and has one of the largest homeless populations in the United States. At the time of this study, Los Angeles County was ranked as a mid-tier county with a distress score of 43.3 as compared to the prosperous Alameda County with a distress score of 12.9. Alameda ranks 6th out of California's 58 counties while Los Angeles ranks 31st. Alameda County had at or below national average statistics for negative factors impacting community economic prosperity with the exception of available housing. Los Angeles County had lower educational attainment, higher poverty, higher unemployment, less housing, lower average income, greater job loss, and more business closings than the national average and Alameda County. Despite these differences, homelessness was persistent in both LAUSD and OUSD and is trending upwards. Contrary to the economic status of Alameda County, the OUSD sample displayed a higher overall percentage of housing unstable students.

With regard to shared characteristics of response efforts to homelessness in LA County and Alameda County, the legislation and funding efforts deployed by the state of California can be observed across both counties. Assembly Bill 1482 provides rent control and tenant protections that extend across both counties. Senate Bill 330 makes the construction of new housing easier, which is crucial to homelessness alleviation as both counties experience below national average housing vacancy rates. HUD Homeless Emergency Aid Program block grants fund interventions in both counties by providing funds for energy assistance in low-income households. Approval of California state Senate Bill 1380 makes both counties housing first zones that remove restrictive moralistic impediments that often prevent the unhoused from

accessing housing response interventions. Both counties also support safe parking programs, but also support restrictive measures such as no sleep/no camping ordinances that effectively disenfranchises community members who cannot find indoor shelter at night.

Neither of the counties housing the school districts employ radically different response efforts and many of the response efforts they employ are similar in nature. The cities of Los Angeles and Oakland both use a general homelessness strategy as approved by the local government to centralize some services for ease of access and overall efficient implementation. Both cities support efforts through those strategies like rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing. Federal COVID-19 funding dollars were used in both cities to implement project Room Key which temporarily housed the homeless until the project morphed into project Home Key, permanently modifying motels and hotels into supportive housing. Los Angeles County and Alameda County both have workforce development programs and programs designed to pre-empt homelessness by vulnerable populations.

Interventions are funded by similar mechanisms in both counties. Taxation and bonds through measures like A1, H, KK, Q and W along with propositions like HHH and Prop 2 feed into the general funds that support permanent housing and other homelessness prevention methods. Philanthropic and private sector contributions bolster these funding pools. Charities and CBOs perform the on the ground work to connect both counties populations with these resources and provide their own interventions where funding allows.

Summary

Rising housing instability is a challenge for California students in LAUSD and OUSD. This study used quantitative and qualitative data to determine if this housing instability presented disparities based on race and sexual orientation. The study also describes some of the ways in

which the two school districts' communities responded to housing instability. A descriptive quantitative case study approach was used to answer the questions:

> 1.a) Within each school district (case), how is the prevalence of self-reported adolescent housing instability in California related to racial identity and sexual orientation?
>
> 1.b) Across cases, how is the prevalence of self-reported adolescent housing instability in California related to racial identity, sexual orientation, and school district location?
>
> 2.a) Within each school district (case), what are the characteristics of local community economic distress and housing instability response efforts?
>
> 2.b) Across cases, how do local community economic distress and housing instability response efforts compare?

Questions 1.a and 2.a are the crux of the within-case quantitative and qualitative analyses which consisted of crosstabs, Fisher exact tests and descriptive analysis of data gathered from a YRBSS sample, the DCI, and various governmental and CBO websites.

The county that houses the LAUSD provides a picture of a community dealing with an economic picture that is distressed below the national average in many respects. This distress is mirrored in high levels of homelessness and housing instability within the student body. Housing instability in the sample was close to the actual percentage of the housing instability reported by the district, but did not demonstrate any notable disparities between populations within the case. Quantitative analysis did not reveal any disparities between populations at a statistically significant level. County and city governments prioritized homelessness mitigation efforts and local CBOs played significant roles in reducing the effects of housing instability.

Th OUSD community embodies economic privilege on its surface. Yet the student population in the sample experienced significant housing instability. Percentage wise, housing instability within the OUSD sample was even greater than that reported by the department of education. There were no notable disparities in housing instability between racial and sexual identity groups and analysis failed to find any statistical significance between the housing experience of any group. Governmental funding and planning as well as charitable activity and community organizations comprised the bulk of identified response efforts.

Research questions 1.b and 2.b focused on a comparison of the two districts. Though reflecting disparate economic pictures, both communities are facing substantive housing crises and have a deficiency in available housing. The samples were reflective of the districts they were drawn from. The LAUSD sample was mostly white and the OUSD sample was primarily Black. Despite being in a more economically stable county, the OUSD sample had twice the housing unstable students per capita in its population. The same types of response efforts were employed by governments and local communities in counties of both school districts. To identify if a relationship for disparities in housing instability existed between the districts, a chi-square test of independence was conducted. The chi-square analysis determined that there was a relationship between the school district and student race. Chi-square analysis also determined that there was a relationship between the school district and the likelihood of housing student housing instability. These results should be taken cautiously due to the nature of the dataset and the sample size available.

CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The current study was an exploration of the relationship between housing instability of students and potentially exacerbating factors such as race, sexuality, and community. Chapter 5 is a final summary of the research problem, methodology used, and study results. The implications of the study's results as well as suggestions for future interventions are made.

There is an overrepresentation of youth of color among the homeless population in the United States resulting from complex interactions between systemic racism, economic marginalization, housing discrimination, and inequities in education and social services. Structural barriers, including the legacy of discriminatory housing policies and the disproportionate involvement of youth of color in the foster care and juvenile justice systems, have entrenched these disparities. Socioeconomic inequalities, particularly those affecting marginalized racial groups, exacerbate these conditions, making it difficult for individuals to escape the cycle of homelessness once they fall into it.

Homelessness disrupts academic achievement, attendance, and long-term educational success of students, contributing to the perpetuation of poverty and housing instability. While policies like the McKinney-Vento Act provide critical protections for homeless students, further efforts are needed to address the structural barriers that prevent them from accessing a quality

education. Support services, early interventions, and comprehensive policy reforms are essential to improving educational outcomes and breaking the cycle of homelessness.

The homelessness crisis in Los Angeles is rooted in structural economic inequalities, systemic racism, and the city's housing affordability crisis. Despite the implementation of significant policy measures such as Measure H and Proposition HHH, the scope of homelessness in the city continues to grow. Addressing this issue requires not only a sustained investment in affordable housing and support services but also systemic reforms that tackle the racial and economic disparities at the heart of the crisis. The synthesis of peer-reviewed research underscores the need for comprehensive, long-term solutions to effectively combat homelessness in Los Angeles.

Homelessness in Oakland is driven by problems with housing affordability, systemic racial inequities, and policy shortcomings. The city’s homelessness crisis reflects broader socio-economic challenges seen across California, particularly in urban areas facing gentrification and displacement. While policy efforts such as tenant protections and affordable housing initiatives have been implemented, they have not been enough to curb the rising rates of homelessness. As research has shown, addressing homelessness in Oakland will require a more comprehensive and sustained approach that tackles both the immediate needs of the homeless population and the underlying structural drivers of the crisis.

The barriers to understanding and preventing youth homelessness in the United States are significant. Challenges in data collection, inconsistent policies, fragmented services, and the diverse experiences of homeless youth all contribute to the difficulty of effectively addressing this issue. To overcome these barriers, it is critical to develop targeted interventions that consider the unique needs of homeless youth and to improve data collection methods to ensure that all

homeless youth are accurately counted and served. From Housing First models to family reconnection efforts, trauma-informed care, and educational support, these interventions reflect a holistic approach that recognizes the complex circumstances of homeless youth. Despite the progress that has been made, there are still ongoing challenges such as funding limitations and the need for specialized services for marginalized groups like LGBTQ+ youth. The need for continued research and innovation remains for program development to further reduce youth homelessness across the country.

Discussion of Results

The historical disparities in housing instability among marginalized groups was explored by focusing on the intersection of race, sexuality, and housing instability in California school districts. Using Yin's (2018) multiple case study with embedded unit of analysis, the researcher used a descriptive quantitative case study approach to examine housing instability in the LAUSD and OUSD. Employing a pragmatic worldview, this study combined quantitative YRBSS data to gain insight into the housing instability of the targeted population. The research design included cross-tabulations, Fisher exact test, and chi-square analysis to assess relationships between study variables. Qualitative contextual data from local economic and homelessness response efforts were also collected to understand the broader context of housing instability in Los Angeles and Oakland.

Results from the quantitative analyses and qualitative descriptive findings on response efforts were examined separately, within case, before being compared in cross-case analysis to see if any broader trends could be determined between the districts. The results provide a description of the broad demographic differences and similarities in overlapping prevalence. The use of Critical Race Structuralism and Quantitative Critical Theory as a lens to filter those

descriptive narratives encouraged contextualization and mindfulness of the reality that the study's findings, alone, are neither generalizable nor wholly representative of the populations explored.

The results of this study arise from the examination of two school districts representative of urban educational environments. The cross examination of these districts within a singular context, the state of California, contributes to a more robust understanding of what homelessness looks like within the state. The shared sources of funding, differences in populations, similar policy approaches, and differing grassroots response efforts paint a picture that may promote understanding of how to better address this problem within the state.

The LAUSD community is one marked by economic distress that ranks below the national average. This distress is paralleled by high levels of homelessness and housing instability among the district's students. However, analysis of the LAUSD sample revealed that while the levels of housing instability were close to those reported by the district, no notable disparities existed between racial or sexual orientation groups within the sample. Quantitative analysis further found no statistically significant differences in housing instability among different populations. Importantly, county and city governments have taken a proactive stance by prioritizing homelessness mitigation efforts, and local CBOs have played pivotal roles in alleviating housing instability. These interventions include funding for shelters, affordable housing development, and support services specifically aimed at stabilizing housing for vulnerable populations.

In contrast, the OUSD community outwardly represents a more economically privileged area. Nevertheless, the students in the sample experienced significant housing instability, with percentages even exceeding those reported by the California Department of Education. Despite

this higher level of instability, no disparities were observed between racial or sexual orientation groups, and quantitative analyses similarly failed to reveal statistically significant differences. The response to housing instability in OUSD largely consisted of governmental planning, funding efforts, and contributions from charitable organizations and community groups. Similar to the LAUSD, these initiatives were geared towards addressing the acute housing needs of students and ensuring their access to stable living conditions.

Cross-case analysis found overlapping deficiencies and response efforts. Despite their starkly different economic situations, one community grappling with distress and the other perceived to be more stable, both faced substantial housing crisis marked by an insufficient supply of affordable housing. The samples from each district were largely reflective of the broader populations in those areas with the LAUSD sample being majority White, while the OUSD sample was primarily Black. Notably, despite the more economically stable setting of OUSD, it reported twice as many housing-unstable students per capita compared to LAUSD.

The response strategies employed by both school districts were comparable, involving similar roles for governmental bodies and local community organizations in addressing the housing challenges. Chi-square tests of independence were conducted to investigate whether a relationship existed between the school district and student characteristics of race, sexual orientation, and likelihood of housing instability. The results revealed a statistically significant relationship between the school district attended and both race and the likelihood of experiencing housing instability, indicating that these factors were interconnected within the larger socio-economic context of the districts.

Research Questions 1.a, 2.a (LAUSD)

Research question 1.a was devised to detect disparities in housing instability. However, the analysis of the case study sample revealed that while the levels of housing instability were close to those reported by the district, no notable disparities existed between racial or sexual orientation groups within the sample. Quantitative analysis further found no statistically significant differences in housing instability among different populations based on the 2017 YRBSS data. Of the 175 twelve to eighteen year old students from LAUSD who responded to the question on housing instability only five reported being housing unstable.

Question 2.a found that LA County and city governments have taken a proactive stance by prioritizing homelessness mitigation efforts, and local CBOs have played notable roles in mitigating housing instability. These response efforts include funding for shelters, affordable housing development, and support services specifically aimed at stabilizing housing for vulnerable populations. However, these response efforts pale in comparison to the overwhelming need of the homeless community.

Research Questions 1.a, 2.a (OUSD)

In the case of the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), the relationship between adolescent housing instability and the variables of race and sexual orientation was slightly more nuanced. The larger sample size of students who met the racial criteria and answered the homelessness question yielded more affirmation of housing instability. Of the responses from 507 students who answered the related YRBSS item, 18 reported housing instability. Both districts are primarily composed of students of color. However, OUSD possesses a higher number of Black students than White. Still, a Fisher exact test indicated no significant relationship between race and housing instability ($p = 0.143$). This suggests that while Black

students were overrepresented in the housing unstable population, the sample size was too small to establish a significant statistical correlation between race and housing instability in this case.

Oakland and Alameda County have implemented several initiatives to address homelessness. City measures and grassroots organizations support long-term housing solutions, while legal protections such as the Just Cause Eviction Ordinance help prevent arbitrary displacement of tenants from a competitive market. The city's focus on a Housing First approach, coupled with substantial funding from both public and private sources, highlights a diverse approach to response efforts. However, despite these efforts, the high rate of housing instability, particularly among Black adolescents, signals that structural inequalities and systemic barriers continue to disproportionately affect marginalized communities within Oakland. The findings underscore that housing instability in OUSD could be more reflective of broader socioeconomic issues affecting the Black community rather than simple direct racial discrimination in the housing sector.

Research Questions 1.b, 2.b

Research question 1.b. examined the similarities and difference of the variables across cases using quantitative data to explore the relationship between adolescent housing instability, race, sexual orientation, and school district location. OUSD had a higher percentage of students reporting housing instability (7%) compared to LAUSD (3%). Although both districts predominantly serve students of color, OUSD had a larger proportion of Black students, while LAUSD’s included a larger White student population. A common thread in both districts was the overrepresentation of racial minorities in the population of students experiencing housing instability. In LAUSD, White and heteronormative students formed most of the stable housing

group, whereas Black and heteronormative students dominated this group in OUSD. Sexual minorities made up 16% of the OUSD sample and 14.1% in LAUSD.

A Fisher exact test conducted within each sample indicated no statistically significant relationship between race, sexual orientation, and housing instability. However, Pearson chi-square tests for cross-case analysis showed that race approached significance ($p = .058$) across both districts, although no significant relationship was found between district, sexual orientation and housing instability. Notably, significant relationships were identified between school district and race ($p < .001$), as well as school district and housing instability ($p = .035$).

Question 2.b found that despite substantial differences in the economic conditions of Los Angeles County and Alameda County, both districts experienced persistent housing instability. Both counties employed similar state-mandated homelessness response strategies, including the Housing First model and rent control measures (e.g., Assembly Bill 1482). Additionally, federal programs such as Project Room Key and Project Home Key, which converted motels into permanent supportive housing, were implemented in both counties. Despite these interventions, homelessness remains a critical issue in both regions, with rising trends in housing instability. The persistence of housing instability, especially among marginalized groups, suggests that these interventions may not fully address the deep-rooted socioeconomic inequities in either district.

Implications for Practitioners

What this research demonstrates is the need for further study. While existing research demonstrates the need for various interventions around youth homelessness, there is not adequate representation across enough groups within the existing literature. Previous studies and anti-racist frameworks tell us that the more minority statuses an individual falls under, the greater the likelihood of disenfranchisement. Greater still, these non-majority statuses are believed to

aggregate which places already vulnerable populations at even greater risk. While every permutation of vulnerability may not be explorable due to difficulty in obtaining appropriate sample sizes, awareness of these intersections must become the crux of initial demographic questioning in both research and direct intervention work.

To do this, researchers and practitioners need better tracking mechanisms and engagement tools to support interactions with housing unstable individuals and families. The current research notes that the initial identification and subsequent tracking of homeless youth is currently insufficient. While current measures aimed at reducing homelessness and some of its antecedents are important, equally as important are the preventative methods that reduce the likelihood of experiencing the trauma of homelessness. By this logic, more resources must be allocated towards the creation and implementation of new methods to adequately track youth homelessness and its pre-emptive markers. Such efforts may yield ways to effectively prevent the increased cost of homelessness interventions by subsidizing specific areas of vulnerability as opposed to the increased costs of re-housing children and families.

Universality in housing response efforts is not the key to ending homelessness in a societal framework that does not view universal housing as a legally enforceable right. Attempted one size fits all solutions often fail to provide adequate protections for populations that face the most societally hardened discriminations. Hence the need for models such as Housing First. While models like Housing First are excellent for ensuring increased access for some populations, geographic and cultural factors are a large part of any response efforts to disenfranchised individuals. Attitudes towards local funding measures can be just as impactful to eliminating homelessness as local weather patterns are to affordable housing and shelter construction. Both of these things can change from state to state, county to county, and city to

town. Communities with ‘not in my back yard’ (NIMBY) movements are especially hard to penetrate. Adequate funding in preventative models must be allocated towards reassuring communities regarding the protection of the rights of all members when creating homelessness solutions.

The social science community, interventionists, and the community writ large must also provide further pressure from a moralistic stance that acknowledges human suffering and vulnerability in order to encourage stronger governmental intervention. Homelessness is a national problem that is increasing in the U.S. due to various policies and failures to provide regulatory protections for the citizenry. America does not provide universal nutrition nor universal medical care for children. Within social and political spheres there are those who do not advocate for universal programs, which is arguably tantamount to opposing these endeavors. With prevailing attitudes that currently allow millions of children to fall through the holes of the nation’s safety nets, change cannot be achieved.

While many would argue that a moralistic framework is in and of itself enough from an ethical standpoint, it is unenforceable. As such, researchers and practitioners must make arguments that meet people where they are. Given the constant internal debates over social narratives in policy making to determine if interventions will be enacted, solutions found within respected frameworks must also be utilized. Capitalism is, arguably, responsible for the majority of homelessness in a capitalistic framework that lacks basic universal housing. However, if frameworks like capitalism prevail in universal housing arguments, then moralistic arguments are moot. Continued production of scientific data and intervention models that address the effects of homelessness on educational attainment, the workforce and subsequent national GDP are needed.

Recommendations

With over 4.2 million young people experiencing some form of homelessness annually, the issue should, arguably, be reaching a form of moralistic critical mass (Morton et al., 2018). Addressing this crisis requires a comprehensive approach that includes prevention, immediate support, and long-term housing solutions. Prevention is key to reducing youth homelessness, and strategies generally focus on early intervention and addressing systemic risk factors. Dworsky et al. (2013) highlight that youth aging out of foster care are particularly vulnerable to homelessness, making targeted prevention programs essential. Implementing transitional planning and offering supportive services before these youth leave the foster care system can significantly reduce the likelihood of homelessness (Dworsky et al., 2013).

Educational interventions also play a crucial role in preventing youth homelessness. Tierney et al. (2014) emphasize that schools serve as a critical point of contact for identifying at-risk youth. Programs such as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act provide critical support by ensuring that homeless youth remain enrolled in school and receive necessary services like transportation and counseling. Early identification of youth at risk, coupled with educational continuity, can help prevent homelessness by ensuring they stay connected to supportive services.

Family-focused interventions, particularly for LGBTQ+ youth who face heightened risks of homelessness due to family rejection, are also essential. Samuels et al. (2019) found that family therapy and conflict resolution programs that aim to address issues related to sexual orientation and gender identity have been successful in reducing youth homelessness by repairing family relationships, when it is safe to do so. These programs focus on mediation, counseling, and education for families to prevent youth from being forced out of their homes.

For young people who are already experiencing homelessness, providing immediate and appropriate support is crucial. Emergency shelters and drop-in centers are often the first line of defense, offering basic services such as food, shelter, and medical care. Hyde (2013) discusses the role of crisis shelters in providing not only immediate relief but also connections to long-term services, including mental health care and housing referrals. These centers are often tailored to meet the unique needs of homeless youth, such as offering LGBTQ+-inclusive environments and trauma-informed care.

In addition to shelter services, mobile outreach programs have been identified as effective ways to reach homeless youth who may be reluctant to access traditional services. Slesnick et al. (2016) highlight that outreach programs, which provide food, hygiene products, and referrals to services, are instrumental in building trust with homeless youth and helping them access needed resources. These programs can be especially beneficial for young people who are street-based and disconnected from existing social service systems.

Mental health services are also a vital component of supporting homeless youth. Many have experienced significant trauma before or during their time on the streets. Havlicek et al. (2016) emphasize the importance of trauma-informed care in addressing mental health needs, noting that integrating mental health services with housing interventions can help stabilize youth and increase their engagement with support programs. Offering counseling, therapy, and psychiatric services is essential to helping homeless youth cope with the emotional and psychological toll of homelessness.

Securing stable housing is the ultimate goal for interventions aimed at homeless youth, and several strategies have proven effective. The Housing First model, which provides immediate access to permanent housing without preconditions, has been successful in reducing

homelessness among youth populations. Henwood et al. (2015) found that youth in Housing First programs were more likely to remain housed and engage with support services compared to those in traditional shelter-based systems. By removing barriers such as sobriety or employment requirements, Housing First models ensure that youth can focus on stabilizing other aspects of their lives once they have secure housing.

Transitional housing programs, which provide temporary housing along with supportive services, are another key strategy for helping homeless youth move towards permanent housing. Ferguson et al. (2016) note that transitional housing programs often offer job training, education, and life skills development, which are critical for helping youth achieve self-sufficiency. These programs typically last between 18 and 24 months and are designed to help young people gain the skills they need to maintain long-term housing.

Finally, supportive housing programs that combine affordable housing with ongoing case management and access to services have shown promise in helping youth maintain housing stability over time. Wagaman et al. (2018) discuss the success of supportive housing interventions for LGBTQ+ youth, noting that these programs address the unique challenges faced by this population, including discrimination and family rejection. By providing both housing and comprehensive support services, these programs help youth transition out of homelessness and into stable, independent living situations.

Summary

The disproportionate representation of youth of color in the homeless population of the United States reflects the entrenched effects of systemic factors, including structural racism, housing discrimination, economic marginalization, and inequities within education and social services. Youth of color, particularly BIPOC populations, bear the long-term consequences of

these deleterious systemic factors. This study explored a small population of students in two areas notorious for the high density of their homeless populations.

This study matters because the consequences of homelessness for adolescents are especially concerning. Homeless students face significant challenges that disrupt academic performance, including chronic absenteeism, frequent school transfers, and inadequate access to educational resources. These disruptions contribute to diminished academic achievement, lower graduation rates, and limited future opportunities. The McKinney-Vento Act provides essential protections for homeless students, such as ensuring transportation to their school of origin and immediate school enrollment. However, these provisions alone are insufficient to address the systemic barriers that prevent homeless students from accessing equitable educational opportunities. A multi-layered approach, combining early interventions, comprehensive support services, and broader policy reforms, is needed to break the generational cycle of homelessness and improve educational outcomes for these students.

The homelessness crisis in California, particularly in urban centers such as Los Angeles and Oakland, is perpetuated by known structural economic inequalities, systemic racism, and a severe housing affordability crisis. While policy initiatives such as Measure H and Proposition HHH in Los Angeles and tenant protections in Oakland aim to address these challenges, the persistence of homelessness in these regions underscores the limitations of these measures. The failure to dismantle broader racial and economic disparities suggests the need for more comprehensive reforms targeting the underlying causes of housing instability.

This study employed a multiple case study methodology (Yin, 2018) to investigate the factors contributing to adolescent housing instability in two major California school districts: the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Oakland Unified School District. A descriptive

quantitative approach was used, relying on data from the 2017 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) to analyze housing instability in these districts. The study focused on examining how race, sexual orientation, and other demographic factors were associated with housing instability. To determine relationships between these variables, the study employed cross-tabulations, Fisher's exact test, and chi-square analyses.

Qualitative data on local economic conditions and homelessness response efforts were also incorporated into the analysis to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the context in which housing instability occurs. The study used Critical Race Structuralism and Quantitative Critical Theory frameworks to explore how systemic inequalities related to race, socioeconomic status, and sexual orientation influence housing instability. These frameworks acknowledge the complex and intersectional nature of housing instability while recognizing the limitations of generalizing the study's findings beyond the selected populations. CRS was used in the exploration of the significance of marginalized identities and their known effects on homelessness which in turn impacts the educational process. The current study used CRS to explore the relationships of these identities and their potential differences from majority group experiences through statistical analysis. QuantCrit was then applied to the examination of those findings because the racism that CRS attempts to explore would not be amenable to quantification without contextualization. Lack of neutrality when explaining the findings in the data set helped to contextualize both district samples and was also important to prevent attachment of deficit-based themes to the analysis. Overlapping marginalized identities, did not demonstrate statistical significance in prediction of homelessness; however, the precaution was still necessary given the historic vulnerabilities of the examined populations.

The analysis of the LAUSD and OUSD case samples uncovered both similarities and differences in the prevalence of housing instability and the structural drivers of homelessness in these communities. In LAUSD, economic distress emerged as the primary factor contributing to housing instability, although no statistically significant disparities were found between racial or sexual orientation groups. Local government initiatives and community-based organizations played active roles in addressing homelessness by developing affordable housing, providing shelter services, and implementing support programs for vulnerable populations.

In contrast, OUSD, located in a relatively more economically privileged area, exhibited higher rates of housing instability compared to LAUSD. Despite this, no significant disparities in housing instability were observed between racial or sexual orientation groups within OUSD either. The Oakland district also demonstrated robust intervention efforts, with both governmental and community contributions working toward mitigating homelessness. Similar to LAUSD, the quantitative analysis did not reveal statistically significant differences between demographic groups in housing stability within OUSD.

A cross-case analysis indicated that while both districts faced substantial housing challenges, they did so within different economic contexts. LAUSD, with a predominantly White population, had lower rates of housing instability compared to OUSD, where Black students constituted a significant portion of the population. Despite OUSD being situated in a more economically stable area, it reported a higher percentage of housing-unstable students. These findings suggest that even in economically secure regions, systemic drivers like racial inequities, historical discrimination, and gentrification still play a significant role in contributing to housing instability.

The study also highlighted commonalities in the response strategies employed by both districts. Both LAUSD and OUSD relied on a combination of governmental initiatives and grassroots efforts to address homelessness. Community-based organizations, along with legislative measures such as affordable housing bonds and emergency shelter funding, were integral to their local homelessness response strategies. The chi-square test of independence further revealed a statistically significant relationship between school district, race, and the likelihood of experiencing housing instability, which underscores the broader socio-economic context that shapes these patterns.

The findings of this study highlight the pressing need for comprehensive and diverse response efforts to address adolescent housing instability in California. One key implication is the importance of dismantling the structural barriers that perpetuate homelessness, particularly for marginalized racial and sexual orientation groups. To address these challenges, policymakers must focus on increasing the availability of affordable housing, improving access to educational opportunities for homeless youth, and providing targeted support services. These interventions should aim to prevent housing instability from occurring in the first place by identifying and addressing its root causes.

This study also emphasizes the need for early intervention programs that focus on identifying students at risk of housing instability and providing them with the necessary resources and support to remain in stable housing. Future research should explore more specific factors contributing to housing instability at the local level, including the impact of shifting economic and policy conditions. Further research examining the impact which the intersection of marginalized identities like race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status have on housing instability should be studied.

In the case of OUSD, the relationship between housing instability and variables such as race and sexual orientation reveals a complex and nuanced pattern. Black students, particularly those who identify as heteronormative, were disproportionately represented among the housing-unstable population. However, a Fisher exact test indicated no statistically significant relationship between race, sexual orientation, and housing instability within this sample. This suggests that broader socioeconomic issues affecting the Black community may be driving housing instability in OUSD, rather than direct associations with race or sexual identity.

This study underscores the complex relationship between housing instability, race, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic conditions in California's urban school districts. While initiatives in both LAUSD and OUSD reflect efforts to address homelessness, the persistence of housing instability among marginalized groups signals the need for more comprehensive interventions. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated efforts between educational institutions, government agencies, and community organizations to dismantle the structural barriers that perpetuate housing instability and provide equitable opportunities for all students.

Pearson chi-square tests affirm that there was a relationship between the variable of race and the school district that a student in the sample attends. Chi-square test also affirm that there is a relationship between the variable of housing insecurity and the school district a student attends. Using QuantCrit theory and study sample size/criteria to contextualize the fact that more Black students were homeless, the potential district, race, and housing insecurity relationships are pertinent new data. It is known that in the urban context people of color experience disproportional poverty. It is known that poverty and homelessness negatively impact educational attainment. Quantitative data like the DCI information for LA and Alameda County combined with state and local homelessness data potentially demonstrated that economic

disenfranchisement, along with other factors, may have played a significant role in overall homelessness within the population. However, location played a significant role in housing instability and race was directly tied with location. Sample size and demographics do not allow for a definitive take on this matter, but the findings encourage the importance of future consideration.

The potential directions of future research may be apt to consider that singular statuses are not sufficient to judge potential homelessness vulnerability. Much of the current research and the Quantitative Critical framework support this. However, a deconstruction of the effects of these overlapping identities may become key in dispelling future arguments related to causation. The political frameworks that are often responsible for dealing with significant social issues such as housing insecurity are sometimes navigated with obtuse viewpoints that can mistakenly point towards obvious primary causes of social inequity. In that case of housing, there are those who might argue that we live in a post-racialized society and that wide-spread racial based housing discrimination no longer exists. These same considerations may be applied to other protected statuses such as sexual orientation. The unwarranted removal of these minority statuses can be used as a bad-faith justification that economics take primacy when it comes to housing access because housing in capitalistic markets is not guaranteed and may dependent on the ability to pay for it.

Capitalism can be a politically safer argument than racialized inequity because the premise of free-market economies can make legislation difficult and there is often no expectation of change. If it can be demonstrated that race, and not capital alone, plays a significant part in systemic housing disenfranchisement, more pressure can be applied to explore the potential connections. Subsequent continued research may be able to uncover systemic issues that are

protected by current laws and consider how they might be enforced. It may also encourage the creation of new policies that fill in existing gaps which lead to unequal access in the ability to obtain and maintain stable housing. Such work will be crucial in breaking the cyclical generational tax of poor mental/physical health, stunted educational attainment, and general poverty that the already vulnerable populations of this country pay far too often.

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