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Experiences of Young Homeless Adults in Transitional Housing

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Walden University

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Walden University

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Cornelia Edoh

has been found to be complete and satisfactory in all respects,
and that any and all revisions required by
the review committee have been made.

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Walden University
2019

Abstract

Experiences of Young Homeless Adults in Transitional Housing

by

Cornelia Edoh

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Psychology

Walden University

June 2019

Abstract

Homelessness continues to be a major and a comprehensive issue facing the United States, and it is a broad concern when it affects young adults. Research on the way individuals who are homeless perceive shelters, transitional programs, and housing program in general has been limited. Transitional living programs deliver critically needed temporary services for vulnerable and disadvantaged populations and provide them with the skills and the experiences needed to become independent. The study used a phenomenological design to explore the experiences of young homeless adults who are using transitional housing. The findings of this study may help young adults to advocate for changes that could break their cycle of homelessness. Face-to-face, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 young adults to explore their lived experience of being homeless and using transitional housing program. Ecological theory was used to provide a framework and guide the data interpretation. Data collection continued until data saturation was attained. Moustakas's phenomenological steps were used to analyze and identify core themes and depictions of the lived experiences of these young homeless adults. The findings of this study indicated that services provided by shelters for the homeless and staff attitudes and delivery of services were not always aligned with the needs of those entering shelters, which resulted in shorter stays at the shelters. This study may contribute to positive social change by allowing housing providers to work with young adults to identify better means of providing appropriate services and open pathways from the streets into transitional housing programs.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my wonderful daughter Enyonam Edoh and incredible son Wesley Edoh, who though may be young provided me with endless support and reassurance throughout this doctoral degree journey. I hope that my achievement will also encourage and inspire them to pursue their goals, dreams, aspirations, and always aim for the best.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Despite the currently flourishing economy, homelessness has proven to be a persistent problem notwithstanding policymakers, advocates, and activists addressing it (National Coalition for the Homeless [NCH], 2012). Simply numerating the homeless population at all times has proven to be challenging (Culhane, Metraux, Byrne, Stino, & Bainbridge, 2013). The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (NLCHP; 2013) estimated that 3.5 million individuals experience homelessness each year. Moreover, the National Alliance to End Homelessness (NAEH; 2014) estimated 610,042 individuals to be homeless on a single night in January 2013. NAEH (2017) estimated 564,708 people in 2015 in the United States spent every single night on the streets until they were assisted in finding temporary shelter, food, and bed, as well as assisted in finding employment. The NAEH (2017) found that young adults ages 18 through 24 made up 13% of the homeless population in 2014. Researchers have shown that these young adults are more likely to live in precarious settings and immerse themselves in the street economy mostly through panhandling, pickpocketing, and selling personal belongings just to make ends meet rather than face familial abuse that may have created their situation (Smith-Osborne & Whitehill Bolton, 2013; Woods, Farineau, & McWey, 2013).

Overcoming homelessness may be impossible without the resilience, support, and successful utilization of transitional facilities (Mackelprang, Qiu, & Rivara, 2015). Hoshide, Manog, Noh, and Omori (2011) identified life to be more unbearable physically, emotionally, and mentally among individuals who do not obtain transitional

housing. According to Padgett, Smith, Henwood, and Tiderington (2012), transitional housing is an intermediate step between emergency crisis shelter and permanent housing. Transitional housing is more long-term, services-intensive, and private as compared to emergency shelters, yet it remains time-limited to stay between 3 months and 3 years. Transitional housing provides a safe, supportive environment where residents can overcome trauma and begin to address the issues that led or kept them homeless, thus beginning to build their support network. Padgett et al. (2012) and Ungar (2015) explained that the use of transitional housing reduces stress associated with the ongoing concern about safety experienced while homeless. According to Koh, Hoy, O'Connell, and Montgomery (2012), transitional housing has proven to optimally provide a foundation for health and physical space needed to engage in healthy behaviors. Hoshida et al. (2011) further indicated that individuals who are not using transitional housing have higher rates of incarceration, mental illness, substance abuse, hospitalization, and other health issues. Strength-based perspectives and using mutual supports, as well as establishing trusting relationships with professionals, may successfully allow young homeless adults to use resources that may be available to them (Parsell & Marston, 2016). The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of young adults who are using transitional housing.

I present the following in Chapter 1: the background of problem, the purpose of the study, the nature of the study, the research questions, a conceptual framework, the definition of terms, assumptions, limitations, scope, delimitations, and the significance of the study.

Background of the Problem

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (PL 100-77) defined homeless as an individual having no regular nighttime residence. These individuals may sleep in cars, tents, under bridges, or in abandoned buildings with no adequate protection from the elements. Young homeless adults are often described in numerous ways, depending on how they managed to become homeless. On the streets, the youth may be called runaways, throwaways, street youths, sheltered youths, system youths, and doubly homeless, as some examples (Culhane et al., 2013). Researchers have identified the root causes of homelessness as having limited resources, low-paying jobs, and few benefits (United States Conference of Mayors, 2014). Additionally, family problems, poverty, addiction, abuse, and other trauma have been determined to be contributing factors (Pluck et al., 2011).

Homelessness is a multifaceted and complex issue in this country. The NLCHP (2013) estimated that 3.5 million individuals experience homelessness each year. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) estimated that 943,017 individuals who were homeless within 2014 used shelter programs in the United States (as cited in Henry, Cortes, Shivji, Buck, Khadduri, & Culhane, 2014). Researchers have indicated that there are benefits available to individuals who are homeless, of which many are unaware, except for the use of food stamps. In 2016, President Obama's budget called for deep commitment to end homelessness (Dobbs et al., 2012). With a budget of \$5.5 billion, the Opening Doors program was launched, and ambitious goals were set to fight this social issue to end homelessness amongst individuals of all ages (Dobbs et al.,

2012). This budget included key investments in mainstream programs needed to end homelessness, such as 67,000 new housing choice vouchers to support individuals who are homeless (Dobbs et al., 2012). Programs such as transitional housing services, which focus on a holistic or change approach, as well as community restoration of social networking and trauma informed programs are supported by this grant. Through grant programs, individuals may be exposed to services that come along, such as counseling, support groups, safety planning, advocacy, and other practical services like employment services, transportation vouchers, telephone, and referral to other agencies (Kuuire, Arku, Luginaah, Buzzelli, & Abada, 2016). Individuals using the transitional housing services may be moved thereafter into permanent housing (Hu & Chou, 2016). Exploring the reasons surrounding these young homeless individuals not using these available benefits, particularly the transitional housing facilities, may allow for a better understanding of the way services are delivered and communicated to this population.

The issue of homelessness continues to be a pervasive subject despite increased funding and the HUD pledging to eradicate homelessness. In the United States, shelter programs provide the homeless with temporary housing and meals (Henry et al., 2014). The continuum of care model was adopted under this commitment (Ball, 2011). With the use of a continuum of care, individuals have to seek treatment for substance abuse and mental illness before obtaining housing (Moulton, 2013). Other emerging models encourage the reduction of harm and promote treatment for substance abuse and other mental issues (Garner, Scott, Dennis, & Funk, 2014). By doing this, young homeless adults may be successfully removed from the streets and placed in a permanent housing

structure without using housing to force treatment (Ball, 2011; Fries, Fedock, & Kubiak, 2014). Young homeless adults then are provided with a team of health professionals to support them as they transition into their new housing (Lambert, 2011). Social networking seems to be very important and plays an influential role within this population for their survival (Choukas-Bradley, Giletta, Widman, Cohen, & Prinstein, 2014; Cronley & Evans, 2017; Henwood et al., 2015). Spirituality/faith also is considered a social asset, which is linked to their positive well-being and a valuable resource for coping with distressing situations (Gravell, 2013). Exploring additional barriers that may contribute to obtaining resources are invaluable.

Statement of the Problem

Homelessness has been described as a significant domestic and mental health problem in the United States (NLCHP, 2013). It is a multifaceted and complex issue. Researchers have highlighted individuals who are homeless to be disproportionately linked to having higher mortality and morbidity rates and a high rate of substance abuse and mental illness (Foster, Gable, & Buckley, 2012; Gambatese et al., 2013; Moulton, 2013; Petrovich & Cronley, 2015; Pluck et al., 2011; Weinstein et al., 2013). Researchers have illustrated that young homeless adults also face a high level of stress and strain, predisposing them to disproportionate rates of posttraumatic stress symptoms, depression, anxiety disorders, and aggressive behaviors (Omori et al., 2012; Thompson, Bender, Ferguson, & Kim, 2015).

According to a 2014 study conducted in 25 major cities, the main cause of homelessness among individuals stems from the lack of affordable housing, substance,

abuse, mental illness, and poverty (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2013). Lack of awareness concerning the availability of services, lengthy processing times, rigid program rules, the lack of respect by care providers, and past experiences have been found to be contributing factors to not using the resources of transitional housing (Petrovich & Cronley, 2015). Most research done on this population seems to focus on finding solutions for eliminating homelessness (NCH, 2012). Existing research has implied that the reason why most homeless individuals refused being housed is due to the fears of submitting to treatment programs, which may be a prerequisite for admission (Mackelprang et al., 2015). The dearth in research is likely due to this homeless population being a highly transient population of people, and tracking them is difficult and expensive.

While research on barriers to accessing resources is abundant, very little attention has been given to the experiences of young homeless adults between ages 18 to 24 in using transitional housing. Minimal qualitative research has been conducted on the use of transitional housing among this population and even less on ineffectiveness of using transitional facilities (Mackelprang et al., 2015). There is no demonstration whatsoever in existing research of any theories as to why many young adults are homeless, nor has a plausible explanation been provided by researchers on what is keeping young adults in need of transitional housing from obtaining and/or using the available resources. The demographic subgroup of young homeless adults ages 18 to 24 remains the most understudied in comparison to all age groups among the homeless population with the preponderance of focus either homeless adults and/or homeless adolescents (Colby,

2011). This leaves a gap in research on how this age group perceives transitional housing as a survival strategy. Based on this, there is a need to explore how this population perceives transitional housing and the reason they are not using transitional housing as a survival strategy.

According to Mackelprang et al. (2015), individuals who are homeless have faced a complicated set of circumstances. However, there is a gap in the literature about the barriers to transitioning out of homelessness. Programmatic, bureaucratic, and interpersonal barriers may contribute to this population not receiving the intended help from different resources, including agencies who may be working in conjunction to assist them. Researchers have indicated most of these providers may not have formal training in assisting individuals who are homeless (Omori et al., 2012). Mackelprang et al. (2015) asserted that to survive on the streets as an individual who is homeless involves strategies to avoid harm, which include finding food and shelter and avoiding physical, emotional and psychological humiliation, sexual trauma, and exploitation. According to Cronley and Evans (2017), service providers can use a strength-based approach in enhancing a homeless individual's well-being, self-esteem and self-confidence.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of young homeless adults aged 18 to 24 who are using transitional housing. One-on-one semistructured interviews were used to explore and to gain a better understanding of the experience faced by young homeless adults in using transitional housing.

Research Questions

1. How do young homeless adults describe their experiences in using transitional housing?

Subquestions

Subquestion (SQ)1: How do young homeless adults describe their experiences in support programs required for placement in housing?

SQ2: How do homeless young adults describe a successful transitional housing experience?

Conceptual Framework

To understand the vulnerability and risks faced by young homeless adults in using the transitional housing program, I used the ecological theory. A growing body of research tends to address the resources and strengths of young homeless adults and the use of the transitional housing program (e.g., Dunleavy, Kennedy, & Vaandrager 2014; Farrugia, 2011; Ramirez et al., 2013; Toolis & Hammack, 2015). Starting with the work of Robert Park in the 1920s, ecological theory was originally an effort to apply the work of ecologists in an attempt to study animal behavior to the study of human social patterns (Forte, 2007). Hutchison (2011) suggested that behavior is affected by multiple levels of influence, which shape and are shaped by the social environment. Ecological theory is a perspective that views individuals within the context of their environment. The foundation of ecological theory is based on examining individuals within five systems of interconnected relationships that impact an individual's life (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1994), human behavior should be understood by examining multiple levels of the person's environment.

The main assumption of ecological theory is about exploring an individual's growth and development in the context of micro, meso, exo, macro, and the chrono system, resulting in a more thorough assessment of negotiations taking place between an individual and the demands of their environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a). Implications for using this framework relate to understanding an individual's progress in transitional housing and to more societal issues impacting individuals. Each of the system levels contains certain challenges, values, and norms to be addressed by this individual. Variations of the ecological model have been used to demonstrate the complexities of homelessness influenced by the circumstances of the person, including socioeconomic structures and environmental circumstances (Nooe & Patterson, 2010). From an ecological perspective, young homeless adults need numerous resources and support systems to navigate daily activities and attain a stable and permanent housing situation (Nooe & Patterson, 2010).

With ecological theory, behaviors are understood by systemically examining the stressors and supports present in a person's context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a). This is particularly important when looking at individuals experiencing homelessness who are likely to encounter supports and stressors on multiple levels of the environment, including their own family and community systems, transitional housing programs, and through a broader agency and governmental programs.

In ecological theory, a microsystem is seen as the interactions between the individual and the circumstances encountered directly by these individuals in their immediate surrounding (Hutchison, 2011). The microsystem is the immediate environment of the person. For young adults in transitional housing, this may be their friends, other residents, staff, and case manager. At this level, the support system shifts from the family to housing staff, while a young adult's environment also changes from stable to transitional housing.

The microsystem is comprised of both primary and secondary systems, which occur during an individual's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a). The primary contexts involve an individual relying on observation and guidance from others to develop more complex skills, while the secondary context allows the individual to complete activities on their own with the encouragement of others. If an individual fails to obtain the opportunity for secondary context, there will be lack of development in the area. Young homeless adults using transitional housing could find this to be problematic as they may be brought back into primary environments due to the requirement in their housing programs, such as mandatory classes, an imposed schedule, or periodic room checks (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Whether an environment supports or undermines an individual and how many supportive links exist between each environment help determine the potential of the setting; different settings have different patterns of roles, activities, and relationships for individuals (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b). Thus, in the transitional housing setting, young homeless adults may have to adjust their role to adapt to their new system's hierarchy.

The meso system involves the relations between two or more settings. For young adults in transitional housing, there are sometimes barriers to accessing these relationships due to the program structure (Mayer, 2005). However, accessing the program structure can serve as a link to other systems that may provide additional support for young homeless adults. The exo system involves those systems that may indirectly impact a young homeless adult (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). In this situation, this may be the program staff or outside people who fund the program and who may have influence in the program, thus affecting the residents indirectly. The macro system consists of the larger society and their values, beliefs, and culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This system could be the influence of housing policy on young homeless adults, the discrimination they face from others for being young and homeless, or the way the economy is impacting their lives.

The chrono system impact is about consistency or change (e.g., historical events) of the individual and the environment over the life course (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b). Young homeless adults may experience a setback in using the transitional housing facility. As a homeless individual, living within someone else's rules may set them back in their feelings of accomplishment and self-esteem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b). They may end up being kicked out of the transitional housing facility if they fail to follow the set rules in this system. At this stage, they may believe that their poor decisions have led them down this road, or that perhaps they were destined to live without a home, based on their disadvantaged starts (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). In this system, young adults' present realities could not be viewed without in part looking backwards in time. History as a

critical context is clearly important in any effort to understand and give voice to complex experiences. To appropriately intervene, no blame is particularly useful with individuals experiencing homelessness. The focus should be in recognizing the structural causes of homelessness rather than an individual's failures. Therefore, for a transitional housing program to be successful, the housing providers may have to look beyond the problems created by young homeless adults using housing and how they managed to become homeless, thus changing their structure to better suit these young homeless adults (Elizur & Minuchin 1989). In the transitional housing program, the role of the structure is to provide safety for residents but possibly at the expense of their well-being and access to supports. While the transitional program may allow a limited stay, those who follow the rules of the program may be allowed to stay longer until they find a permanent housing (Fischer, 2000).

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979a), every system inevitably interacts with and influences each other in every aspect of an individual's life. An individual seems to find self simultaneously enmeshed in different ecosystems from home to the society and culture. This allows a thorough assessment of negotiation to take place between an individual and the demands of the environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a). Using ecological theory helped me in analyzing and understanding the data collected from young homeless adults and their experiences in using transitional housing. Young homeless adults will work to achieve positive developmental outcomes, despite being exposed to the street menace on a daily basis (Goldstein & Brooks, 2013; Masten, 2013). A more detailed discussion of ecological theory is presented in Chapter 2.

Nature of the Study

The nature of this study was qualitative, using a phenomenological design. Such a design was appropriate since phenomenology commits itself to describing experiences, not explanations or analysis (see Moustakas, 1994). Using a phenomenological approach allowed for a rich, thick description, while the meanings and the essences were understood in the light of intuition and self-reflection (see Moustakas, 1994). Information was gathered from the perspective of young adults who are homeless and are using transitional housing.

According to Williams (2011), qualitative methods are suitable where exploration is needed to better understand the situation under study. Qualitative data allows researchers to present their findings in a creative manner. Quantitative research uses standard methods, such as tables, in presenting the data (Bansal & Corley, 2012). Quantitative analysis also tests hypotheses by examining the association between independent and dependent variables. While quantitative analysis can also explore the relationships between variable, a qualitative approach can examine the meanings of underlying human behavior's experiences (Bansal & Corley, 2012; Rademaker, 2011). Qualitative analysis allows social issues to be investigated and understood in a systemic manner (Joubish, Khurram, Ahmed, Fatima, & Haider, 2011). Qualitative analysis allows data to be collected to produce study results, without building the result in predetermined conclusions; thus, the findings could to be applicable to other research areas (Joubish et al., 2011; Mack, Woodson, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2016).

Participants were recruited from some local homeless shelters within the Phoenix metropolitan area. I conducted in-depth interviews using a phenomenological design. There is greater strength in an interview, as it yields data quickly (Stringer, 2012). According to Stringer (2012), an interview is viewed as a conversation with a purpose. Data captured the participants' attitudes, feelings, emotions, and thoughts. According to Ko, Smith, Liao, and Chiang (2014), a phenomenological design can assist in highlighting the meaning that arises from interactions between people and their world. A phenomenological design assisted me in obtaining an in-depth exploration of the experiences faced by young homeless adults in using transitional housing.

Purposeful sampling was used where focus was given to certain characteristics of the population of interest to ensure the question under study was answered adequately (see Knecht & Fischer, 2015). The data analysis strategy was sorting, matching, and screening of answers given by the participants to provide explanations about the phenomena under study. Questions were coded, and responses were analyzed using the epoche method from Moustakas. Epoche comes from the Greek word that means "suspension" (Moustakas, 1994). The use of epoche allowed judgment to be suspended regarding the general belief in the existence of the external world in sorting out the participants' answers (Hedin et al., 2012).

Questions were directed to young adults experiencing these phenomena. A face-to-face interview with open-ended questions was used. Data were collected from 15 individuals.

Operational Definitions

These definitions provide a better explanation of the key terms used in this study.

Chronically homeless: Individuals who are unaccompanied and may have a disabling condition. They may also have had multiple episodes of homelessness in the past couple of years (NAEH; 2014).

Continuum of care: Local planning bodies responsible for coordinating the full range of homelessness services within a geographical area, including a city, county, metropolitan area, and/or a state (Henry, Cortes, & Morris, 2013).

Ecological theory: A theory developed to describe how an individual's development is affected by their social relationships and the world around them (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Emergency shelter: A place where a temporary overnight shelter is provided to individuals experiencing homelessness for up to 90 days. This includes but is not limited to domestic violence shelters and seasonal shelters (Continuum of Care, 2014).

Shelter programs: A program that intends to provide emergency shelter to a specific subpopulation of the homeless population as well as other services designed to meet the unique needs of those served (Henry et al., 2014).

Transitional housing: A housing program designed to assist individuals experiencing homelessness. It allows these individuals to live there and receive supportive services for up to 24 months (Miller et al., 2011).

Assumptions

The goal of the study was to explore the experience of young homeless adults who are using transitional housing. Two assumptions were identified for this study. The first assumption was that participants would honestly and openly share their experiences using transitional housing facilities as they related to homelessness and the reasons why they are hesitant to use transitional facilities. The second assumption was that I would take notes, reflect on reactions, remain aware of my role, and avoid bias in data analysis and interpretation.

Delimitations

The scope of this research included 15 young homeless adults, ages 18 to 24 years, who are experiencing homelessness and are using transitional housing. According to Kim (2016), individuals who are homeless construct their own realities based upon the current social environment and interactions with other members in the same community. This demographic represents a growing social problem, mostly understudied amongst all age groups within the homeless population (Choukas-Bradley et al., 2014). The delimitation was participants being recruited from transitional housing within Phoenix metropolitan areas. The boundaries of the study were that the participants who are (a) homeless, (b) ages 18 to 24, (c) had the ability to describe their lived experiences with transitional housing.

Transferability

Transferability of findings was not practical as the study was limited to young homeless adults and their experiences for using transitional housing in one specific

metropolitan area. Cope (2014) implied that transferability occurs if the purpose of the qualitative study is to allow generalizations about the phenomenon being studied.

Gunawan (2015), Houghton, Casey, Shaw, and Murphy (2013), and Washington et al. (2012) emphasized transferability as being the responsibility of the user of the research and not the original research.

The use of a qualitative approach limited the ability to generalize the findings to other homeless individuals. My role in the study was dormant, as the participants were allowed to speak candidly about their experiences during this process. The goal of the study was to examine the experiences of young homeless adults who are using transitional housing facilities to form suggestions regarding future training, especially when working with individuals from vulnerable populations.

Social constructivism theory was initially considered for the study; however, this was inappropriate for the goal of the study, which was exploring the lived experiences of young homeless adults and the use of transitional housing as a survival strategy. According to Chompalov and Popov (2014), social constructivism is seen as an umbrella term based on major assumptions about the construction of social life, making of meaning, and the nature of communication between individuals. However, the purpose of this study was to better understand lived experiences in using the transitional housing facility rather than to examine how individuals who are homeless construct or make meaning of their circumstances.

Limitations

One limitation was that some young homeless adults may not have wanted to participate, and their experiences may not be included in the study. Another limitation was allowing these young homeless adults to self-report their circumstances. Brenner and DeLamater (2016) stated that self-report could be inaccurate because of the flaws in memory as a result of transient, suggestibility, absent-mindedness, bias, blocking, persistence, and misattribution, which may cause limitations in most qualitative studies. To control for issues of investigator bias, personal prejudices, beliefs, and perspectives were examined. There was a preconceived notion that the participants had made mistakes, and they were not judged in any form regardless of their mistakes.

Significance

The study has the potential to gain a better understanding of the experiences of young homeless adults ages 18 to 24 in using transitional housing as a strategy for survival. Ecological theory helped shape the perception of young homeless adults and their reasons for not using transitional housing. Therefore, examining the experiences of young homeless adults living in transitional housing facilities helped to improve the understanding of why some homeless young adults are reluctant to use the transitional housing programs available to them and provides insight into possible barriers to accessing social services. This study may result in insights that social workers, shelter workers, and police can use in gaining a deeper understanding of the barriers to social services use. Another goal was to use the experiences in making suggestions in regard to future providers and advocates on gaining a better understanding of the necessary

outreach efforts to better serve young adults experiencing homelessness. Young homeless adults had an active voice in describing their experiences, thus giving voice to possible ways to better inform providers of the type of services effective in assisting in independence achievement. This then can allow providers and advocates to develop outreach programs that better serve young homeless adults.

This study could lead to positive social change by providing a better understanding of the problem, which may lead to improved outreach, more effective programs, and better training of staff, ultimately reducing long term homelessness in society. Young homeless adults could successfully be assisted by service providers from moving from transitional housing to longer-term housing options. Young homeless adults who are now in transitional housing could be allowed to stay on the housing register, while professional staff review their circumstances regularly to ensure the right type of assistance is provided for the duration of their stay. This study could contribute to positive social change by allowing housing providers to work with young homeless adults to identify exit pathways from transitional housing. Young homeless adults could be provided with intensive case management to assist them in the transition into permanent housing. This study could contribute to a positive social change by allowing young homeless adults to be assisted in developing a support system, which could strengthen and stabilize their lives. Young homeless adults could then begin to advocate for changes that could break their cycle of homelessness. Knowing that transitional housing provides a holistic approach in meeting an individual's needs, investment in education and training to improve long-term life chances could be assessed. This study could also contribute to

positive social change by allowing a supportive and nurturing environment to be provided, where young homeless adults could learn how to adjust back to life in the real world.

Thompson et al. (2015) postulated that working with this population is very challenging due to a lack of trust. In creating positive social change, working more effectively with young homeless adults in being open without judging them and understanding them in context could help them build trust and increase support system.

Summary

Individuals who are homeless are one of the most vulnerable populations, with a complex array of negative life circumstances (Pluck et al., 2011). Effective intervention as well as care models are vital and should be used in removing these young homeless adults from this situation. An array of differing definitions have been used to convey what constitutes homelessness and the use of transitional facilities in alleviating this situation. Obtaining housing through transitional programs may be more successful when there is a sense of self-control, a sense of independence, self-reliance without rigid rules, and a long processing time (Jost, Levitt, & Poracu, 2011).

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of young homeless adults who are using transitional housing. Ecological theory was used to further demonstrate the complexities of this population and the use of transitional housing facilities. From an ecological perspective, individuals who are homeless need numerous resources and support systems to navigate daily activities and attain a stable housing situation (Hutchison, 2011). The use of ecological theory assisted me in avoiding an

exclusive focus on individual characteristics. It provided a framework for a better understanding of environmental factors that hinder or foster community integration. In Chapter 2, I review of literature covering the conceptual framework that guided this study. Key concepts regarding the experience of homeless young adults and transitional housing are also presented.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of homeless young adults in using transitional housing. A qualitative phenomenological study was conducted using a one-on-one interview strategy to collect data. Homelessness has been described as a significant domestic and mental health issue in the United States (NLCHP, 2012). Homelessness transcends cultural, racial, geographical, gender, and age boundaries. It is a global and a complex, multifaceted issue with similar issues, irrespective of how homelessness is viewed. Homelessness presents social and financial burdens to society as a whole. Substance use has been identified as the main reason why most homeless individuals refuse accessing transitional housing (Bender et al., 2012). Transitional housing provides temporary housing for young adults who are experiencing homelessness. Transitional housing is used in bridging the gap from homelessness to permanent housing by offering structure, supervision, and support for the homeless population, as well as teaching individuals life skills, and in some cases, education and training (Al-Tayyib, Rice, Rhoades, & Riggs, 2014; Nyamathi, Hudson, Greengold, & Leake, 2012; Ryan, Stanger, Thostenson, Whitmore, Budney, 2013).

The demographic subgroup of young homeless adults ages 18 to 24 remains the most understudied of age groups among the homeless population, with the preponderance of focus either on homeless adults and/or homeless adolescents (Colby, 2011). This leaves a gap in the research on how this population perceives transitional housing as a survival strategy.

The NLCHP (2012) estimates that 2.5 to 3.5 million Americans annually sleep in shelters, transitional housing, and public places not meant for human habitation. The HUD reports the annual counts of the unsheltered population to be inaccurate because not all homeless individuals are counted. In 2012, the number of individuals who experienced homelessness increased to 7.4 million (NLCHP 2012). This included individuals who lost their homes and are living double-up with families or friends due to economic necessity. This was consistent with 2011, when some states saw as much as an 80% increase in homelessness (NAEH, 2014).

According to the National Center for Homeless Education (2014) and the National Center on Family Homelessness (NCFH; 2014), the Department of Education during 2012 to 2013 experienced an increase of 8% in the homeless population. This means that almost 2.5 million children overall were homeless in 2013 (National Center for Homeless Education, 2014; NCFH, 2014).

According to Culhane et al. (2013), individuals who are homeless who may be using shelters may significantly underestimate the problem. The U.S. Census Bureau in 2010 attempted to enumerate individuals who are homeless and believed enumeration to not be a comprehensive count (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). The release of this disclaimer came after low homeless counts were questioned by the proponents in several jurisdictions (Culhane et al. 2013).

Homelessness is a very complex societal problem to resolve, especially when individuals are not using transitional housing facilities. This may increase the barriers to accessing the support of social services, which are designed to assist homeless

individuals with their needs. Individuals who are unsheltered experience more severe certainties and are often distressed, isolated, and predisposed to physical and psychological problems (Henry et al. 2013). However, the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness was adopted for the purpose of this dissertation.

Literature Search Strategy

Organization of Literature Review

In identifying the available research and resources, these databases were used: Google Scholar, EBSCO database, SocINDEX with full text, ERIC, PsycInfo, PsycArticles, Academic Search Complete, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. This search was limited to peer-reviewed journals and full text with references dated within the last 6 years because they contained relevant and historical information and data for the study.

Key Words and Terms Used in the Search

Key words used included *unsheltered and homeless, homelessness, homeless, homeless and housing first, unsheltered and housing first, homeless and transitional housing, homeless and barriers, and homeless and supportive housing*. Additional words that were used were *homelessness, jail, mental illness, substance use, social networks, peers, young adults and adolescents, families and housing programs, and dyadic analysis*. Furthermore, resources found on the HUD and the NAEH websites were used as well.

Conceptual Framework

According to Benston (2015), homelessness among young adults is a complex issue and infiltrates many levels of the environment; because of this, the conceptual framework chosen for the study was the ecological theory. Ecological theory looks at the interaction of personal traits with the environment and states that behavior cannot be understood without systemically exploring the stressors and supports present in an individual's context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a). Bronfenbrenner (1994) stated that ecological theory allows a better understanding of how multiple levels of the environment and context affect psychological growth. This is particularly important when looking at young homeless adults who are using transitional housing facilities, yet possibly encountering stressors on multiple levels of the environment as well as a broader agency and governmental programs.

An effective theoretical lens through which to consider and understand the experience of young homeless adults in using transitional housing facilities was needed for the study. The rationale for the choice of the ecological theory is that it allows a better understanding of how a person's roles and rules may change as they enter a new environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b). Transitional housing was the new environment experienced by the participants in this study. Ecological theory allows individuals to gain a better understanding of how resources could be mobilized to overcome social barriers and increase opportunities for social inclusion (Aubry, Flynn, Virley, & Neri, 2013).

In conceptualizing ecological theory, it is imperative to understand how human behavior could best be understood by exploring multiple levels of the person's

environment. Ecological theory brings together dynamic and complex perspectives, practices, and environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979b). Ecological theory is explored using five key elements such as

1. Interactions between individuals and their contexts known as social systems, which include but are not limited to cultural and sociopolitical systems.
2. Exploration of the interrelationships amongst social systems, consequently stressing the interdependence among the levels of the system.
3. Making the assertion that a change in one ecological setting can influence other things as well as their relationships (Suarez-Balcazar, Fabricio, Garcia-Ramirez, & Taylor-Ritzler, 2013).
4. Exploration of the adaptation of a person to his or her complex environment.
5. Description of issues of succession and acknowledgement of the fact that change is an ever-present reality for the environment and for individuals within it. However, there is an increase in complexity in the interacting systems over time until stabilization is achieved (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2013).

The research question and subquestions were intended to build upon existing theory and to explore the experience of young homeless adults who are using transitional housing facilities as a survival strategy. Considering ecological theory, it is vital to note the theoretical perspective as being an integrative theoretical framework where diverse concepts from distinct areas of discipline and knowledge are being considered. Every area of knowledge is built on another in guiding empirical research to gain better

awareness of how young homeless adults use transitional housing facilities. By using this ecological model, these young homeless adults can work to achieve positive developmental outcomes, despite being exposed to street menaces on a daily basis (Goldstein & Brooks, 2013; Masten, 2013, 2014; Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013; Rutter, 2012).

Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory has several key propositions, such as primary and secondary contexts, which occur throughout an individual's development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a). The primary context involves an individual relying on observation and guidance from others in order to develop more complex skills. The secondary contexts involve an individual completing activities on their own with the encouragement of others. However, if an individual is not given an opportunity for secondary contexts, this individual will not continue in their development in this area.

For young homeless adults using transitional housing, this can be problematic as they may be brought back into primary environments through requirements in their housing programs, which may range from mandatory classes, an imposed schedule, or periodic room checks. In addition, whether an environment supports or undermines a person and how many supportive links exist between each environment help determine the potential of that setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a). In this study, I explored the factors impacting individuals by obtaining help and/or the way the potential for growth and development is being hindered.

Literature Review Related to Key Variables

Social Support and Case Management

Many theories have been developed to explain the dichotomy of homeless young adults and the use of transitional housing facilities. Benston (2015) and Rog et al. (2014) asserted that research on ecological theory has influenced the work of many qualitative studies, with some research linking ecological theory to case management to be very helpful components of this program. Case managers have been identified to be the backbone of the transitional housing program due to the support and resources they offer to individuals using transitional housing facilities (Benston, 2015). Others found the structure of this program to have limited social support through the use of guards, security cameras, barbed wire, and strict visitation rules (Benston, 2015). This, therefore, undermines the support system of these young homeless adults. Benston argued that transitional housing may provide an opportunity for young homeless adults to expand their support networks on multiple levels. However, the social environment may on its own present challenges as young homeless adults in transitional housing may be sharing sleeping and living space with other members.

Tsemberis, Moran, Shinn, Asmussen, and Shern (2003) in their research on homeless individuals diagnosed with mental illness were placed directly into permanent housing with supports, housing retention after graduating from transitional housing facilities. A follow-up study on the same sample and additional research conducted in a similar design model yielded equally positive housing retention results for those who were homeless and diagnosed with a mental illness (Tsemberis & Eisenberg, 2000).

Mixed findings exist that relates to this proposition in the literature on homelessness and social support. Bronfenbrenner (1979b) reports that different settings have different patterns of roles, activities, and relationships for individuals involved in those settings. Ecological theory asserts that the adaptive fitness between subsystems requires matching external relationships, so that the attributes of each unit are positively complementary, thus making the resources exchanged between them to be in a state of exchanged balance. In the situation of individuals utilizing transitional housing facilities, young homeless adults may have to adjust to the roles to adapt to their new hierarchy (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). Ecological theory finally allows transformation to occur. Therefore, Ecological theory pays close attention to an individual's growth and development in the context of micro, meso, exo, macro, and the chrono systems, which take place within an individual and the demands of the environment.

In the Micro system, patterns are formed by the activities, social roles, and interpersonal relations individuals might have in an immediate environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The experiences within the micro system gradually and consistently influence the behaviors of individual or groups of individuals. With this population, navigating through resources such as the application process and having limited family and social networks and managing homelessness and physical health concerns may seem to have a negative impact on young homeless adults' ability to complete tasks and engage in programs successfully.

Lack of social support contributes to a diminished sense of self-worth and self-efficacy. Young homeless adults may not want to seek help from others and connections

they may form with professional in agencies and support programs may not feel genuine to them. Zugazaga (2004) conducted an ethnographic study of homeless to determine the effectiveness of social support in transitional housing using 162 homeless men and women and result shows a higher social support to serve as a buffer against psychosocial stressors by strengthening an individual's coping response. Utilizing transitional housing program will allow young homeless adults to move into a more stable housing situation and provide help from others such as case managers, and other supportive services. Case managers will work with young adults to transform their behaviors and empower young homeless adults. Through this, young homeless adults will recognize their own power and strengths and use it for their own benefit. Every accomplishment of tasks will result in progress and ultimately strengthen young homeless adults' self-esteem, regulate their thoughts, feelings, and actions.

According to Holtschneider (2016) and Jung-Ah, Jeong Jin, Chang-Uk, and Chang-Uk (2013), Ecological theory lies in its commitment to the social support and strength perspective. Guiding the formation of this theory, an individual is viewed within the context of their environment. Dunleavy et al. (2014) found that peer groups could help young homeless adults to build strengths and challenge their typical deviant views. Goodman (1991) looked at 50 homeless and 50 mothers to compare their social support networks and found their support systems to be similar in size, composition, and visitation.

The meso system consists of interrelationships between two or more micro systems, where young homeless adults may want to utilize transitional housing, however,

they lack the ability to trust others, which may impede their ability to accept help from others and use available resources (Hamby et al., 2015; Hoshide, et al., 2011). According to Montgomery, Metraux, and Culhane (2013), young homeless adult may lack access to reliable and accurate information about the resources available and feel they may be put off by the heavy bureaucracy they perceived when asking for and receiving help from public agencies. The barriers here may create toxicity in the environment, thus causing these young homeless adults to remain longer on the streets rather than seeking help (Montgomery et al., 2013). Individuals who are homeless will end up searching for ways to cope with urgent survival issues of being homeless.

According to Lindsey (1998), a combination of risk factors may make life incredibly challenging for individuals to achieve set goals, thus ending up in a double crisis. Koblinsky, Morgan, and Anderson (2010) suggested that individuals who are homeless may externalize their behavior problems due to the cumulative risk they are experiencing. The struggle due to homelessness increases psychological stress, social stigma, and decrease social support, and difficulties providing for themselves (Koblinsky et al., 2010).

With an exo system, two settings will interact; while one setting does not directly affect the individual, the occurrence of an event may directly influence the process within the immediate setting in which the individual is situated (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The situation with this system is that young homeless adults have financial problems that may pose risks to them as they find it difficult to outreach programs that may support them. One of the prerequisites of utilizing transitional housing is to compromise between wants

and needs. Among the things most needed are permanent housing and jobs. Lack of skills and knowledge may keep them from being marketable employees. This situation therefore creates discontent and disenchantment among young homeless adults.

In the exo system, young homeless adults may display courage and adaptability in the midst of change and unfortunate life events. Using young adults' existing strengths and coping skills may help repair previous negative experiences. Caregiver and housing staff could work to support young adults to develop self-identity, based on their ability to overcome challenges and turn them into strengths.

In the macro system, young adults who are homeless may feel some differences in treatment by service providers. They may feel some form of discrimination and neglect from housing agencies and their workers. The issue of race, ethnicity, and stereotyping may arise, as young homeless adults believe that some individuals are more privileged than others during this level (Mayberry, Shinn, Wise, & Benton 2014). For individuals utilizing transitional housing, the rules of the facility may impact their relationship with their social group/support group. There may be decreased in privacy as well as in communication. Gender difference may play another part during this level, thus limiting the ability to receive services.

However, the theoretical driver of Ecological theory is not what needs to be fixed or changed, but what positives can be reinforced. Nevertheless, Ecological theory asserts that the adaptive fitness between subsystems requires matching external relationships, so that the attributes of each unit are positively complementary, thus making the resources exchanged between them to be in a state of exchanged balance (Holtzman, 2016). In

the situation of individuals utilizing transitional housing facilities, they would have to meet their expectations while living in the transitional facility, otherwise they will be rushed out (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

The chrono system was later added to this concept in 1989 to make the theory applicable across the life span and more applicable in the transitional housing issue. By using the chrono system, consistency is supposed to play an essential part. This consistency includes but is not limited to historical events of individuals and the environment over a life course. Young homeless adults in the chrono system could have a setback if goals are not accomplished. Making poor life decisions, could lead to young homeless adults being kicked out of the facility. Using transitional housing, young homeless adults may need to be passive regarding their structure by following the rules, despite the way it may impact their access to support. Following the rules of the program, young homeless adults may be allowed to stay longer, while they continue working and searching for permanent housing.

In contrast, the Ecological approach is optimum when community integration is considered. This approach also facilitates an individual's access to critical resources and community opportunities. The axiom of Ecological theory is interdependence. This means that change in one part will have an impact on the other parts of the system (Kelly, 2006). Providing access to transitional housing not only address the structural cause of homelessness, but also remove the most pressing stressor from these young homeless adults' lives, including their daily struggle to survive (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2014). Having a transitional placement will give them privacy and a sense of safety and stability,

which is very essential to address other stressors, thus reorganizing various aspects of their lives. Through these, young adults will have the opportunity to access to a source of secure income. Additionally, young homeless adults would be linked to mainstream health and social community services that are used by the general population. This will allow young homeless adults to break away from roaming the streets and putting their lives at risk. Nemiroff, Aubry, and Klodawsky (2011) and Townley, Miller, and Kloos (2013) asserted that transitional housing is associated with greater involvement in activities in the community, while social connections play a large role in the lives of young homeless adults and also allows rapprochement with love ones. Aubry et al. (2013), Nemiroff et al. (2011) and Polvere et al. (2013) emphasized that access to housing and other critical resources, give this population a sense of recovering their citizenship and a sense of belonging, increase wellness, improve the quality of their lives, and give them optimism towards the future, thus promoting stability.

In contrast, the ecological paradigm orient researchers and practitioners to positive factors in individuals' lives, which become the focus of change strategies designed to enhance strengths and social support rather than rejection (Shneyderman & Schwartz, 2013). Luthar, Lyman, and Crossman (2014) asserted that young homeless adults are characterized by numerous risk factors, rather than judge them, one can explore their capabilities and coping mechanisms, thus allowing their maladaptive behaviors to be viewed in a context that resemble strength-based perspective. By so doing, young adults will gain self-esteem and competence. The focus should be on their strengths rather than their mistakes (Garmezy & Devine, 1984; Saleebey, 1993).

According to Guo, Slesnick, and Feng (2016), at the core of Ecological theory is the idea that behavioral trajectories and outcomes (such as homelessness) are the result of activities within define settings and/or in response to the demands of specific social systems. The primary goal of any intervention needs to be at least from an Ecological perspective, removing young adults from dangerous settings, making sure they make better decisions about their activities in difficult settings, and replacing settings that promote deviant behavior such as the street with more positive settings that promote healthy and safe behavior.

Slesnick, Prestopnik, Meyers, and Glassman (2007) proposed the use of Ecological theory integrates independence, strength-based case management services, and counseling. Studies show individuals utilizing transitional housing facilities were housed in permanent housing with three months of utility and rental assistance of up to \$600 per month (Slesnick et al., 2007). The use of case management component focused on assisting individuals to meet their basic needs (i.e., referrals to food pantries) and helping individuals to obtain government entitlement such as SSI, SSDI, cash assistance, and food stamps. The counseling approach used will allow operant-based treatment to address a range of concomitant domains. Slesnick et al. (2007) concluded that ecological theory has been tested and found to be successful with individuals who are homeless.

Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing Models

Since the early 1980s, an extensive amount of work has been done by the United States government to address homelessness through various acts and initiatives such as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1986, which consisted of 15 programs

to assist homeless individuals (Moulton, 2013). There has been an expansion of funding and the range of programs offered. About \$1.83 billion was available for the continuum of care in the 2013/2014 fiscal year. About \$40 million was set aside for permanent supportive housing for individuals who are chronically homeless (USDHHS, 2013). HUD also added a supportive housing program that assists in promoting the development of housing and supportive services. In addition, approaches to assisting homeless persons in the transition for homelessness as well as promote the provision of supportive housing in enabling them to live independently (“Nature of Program,” n.d., National Coalition for the Homeless [NCH, 2012]).

Though a wide array of permanent and transitional housing is in progress, homeless individuals are expected to be treated for medical issues and substance abuse prior to being qualified for housing. This in essence is unsuccessful, as it poses a great disadvantage to the success of the program as individuals with mental problems may not stand a chance (Lambert, 2011). However, the housing first model takes on a consumer choice approach, thus placing homeless individuals first in the program, and then provides them with the choice of seeking treatment. This reduces harm to the homeless population as this population will now be encouraged to attend treatments being provided for them. In addition, if the individuals are hospitalized and/or incarcerated, the house will be held until they return.

The housing first model utilizes Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) in supporting this population (Lambert, 2011). Teams of professionals are available in rendering their support, while providing care to individuals who have been housed newly.

This is very effective, even with its costs (NAEH, 2014). Transitional housing has alleviated homelessness, and funds are allocated in a manner that is very efficient and comparable to linear models as a continuum of care (McCormack et al. 2013; Moulton, 2013). Service providers can now deliver coordinated efforts in providing services with innumerable of needs.

In a cost analysis assessment of funding under HUD's continuum of care program, a significant cost savings in transitional housing was noted in comparison to other programs (Moulton, 2013). Programs such as this have successfully moved to at least 20 percent of chronically homelessness through this process to obtain transitional housing and permanent housing (Jost et al., 2011). Individuals using this program will now learn skills, gain sobriety, and receive the most needed mental health services successfully. Using this approach, these individuals now believe in themselves to achieve success, enhance their self-esteem, and self-confidence (Jost et al., 2011). This is also cost effective and assists them with working toward addressing their unfinished business, as well as reducing shelter used among individuals who have mental illness.

Transitional Housing and Program Success

Broadly, transitional housing programs are seen as services intensive facilities created to assist individuals who are homeless in moving into permanent housing (HUD, 2015). Transitional housing allows individuals to stay up to 24 months, though this timeframe may vary from program to program. Here in the United States, most transitional housing programs are small, with more than 50% containing only three to nine housing units (HUD, 2015). Defining the success of these programs could be

difficult. According to Fisher, Mayberry, Shinn, and Khadduri (2014), at least 77% of transitional housing residents will move into permanent housing. The complicating thing about transitional program success is the issue of “creaming.” Burt (2007) states that “creaming” is when individuals with fewer challenges to success are selected as the residents for this program in order to increase program success rates. However, Culhane, Park, and Metraux (2011) echo this claim and state that the great success of this program may be a reflection of selection effects, where individuals with fewer barriers are more likely to become residents of transitional housing programs. Burt (2007) notes that 89% of individuals interviewed for this program will not admit using substances, 72% will not admit having sexual offense charges, 11% will not admit having felony charges, 51% will not admit having a history of violence, and 34% will not admit having mental illness. While keeping the safety of other residents in mind is very crucial, individuals with additional risk factors may be more likely to transitional housing services but have limited access due to these exclusion criteria. Having a better understanding of long-term follow up is also an essential limitation to the success of this program (Fischer, 2000). Additionally, program rules and structure vary across the literature. Benston (2015) states, young homeless adults would have to do their chores, abstain from using drugs, bringing different people to their apartment, and adhere to the rules which are very minimal.

Rog et al. (2014) reports that transitional living programs overall provide subsidized housing for young homeless adults either at no cost or a low rent based on their income. Staff at these programs are typically case managers, who provide assistance

with goals such as employment, education, and developing independent living skills. The site-based programs also employ staff who function like resident advisors to ensure safety, modelling healthy behaviors, and enforcing program expectations. Ecological theory considers individuals as the product of ongoing interaction between themselves and their environment (Hutchison, 2011).

The ecological theory has enabled individuals to gain a larger perspective, more unitary and a comprehensive unit of attention, for a holistic and dynamic understanding of people and the social-cultural-physical milieu (Suarez-Balcazar, 2014).

Transitional housing acts like a form of social support for individuals who are homeless and the challenges that accompany homelessness. Swick and Bailey (2004) described the importance of interagency links where agencies will create partnerships for referrals, trainings, and shared resources to enhance services for homeless individuals. The Ecological system notes that whether an environment supports or undermines an individual and the number of supportive links existing between each environment help determine the developmental potential of that setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A research conducted using 80 homeless participants to determine the eligibility in transitioning to permanent housing from transitional housing facility, studies identified 91% to have major psychiatric diagnosis, and nearly all received federal disability benefits, and half had case managers, result showed 84% were successfully moved to permanent housing from transitional housing (Pearson, Locke, Montgomery, & Burton, 2007).

The transitional housing program increases support networks by providing information and referrals to other agencies in the community. The case manager's roles

are very important when transitional housing is involved as they provide encouragement, motivation, information, and basic needs. Transitional program allows shared experiences and the unique understanding of other residencies. Similarly, Holtrop, McNeil, and McWey (2015) noted the importance of sense of togetherness created through shared experiences among individuals who are homeless in transitional housing. Lack of trust among residents, however, may interfere with this process as homeless individuals have difficulties trusting others amidst stealing in dorms, perceived favoritism, and the spreading of rumors (Hamby et al., 2015).

Accessing support in the transitional housing program is challenging due to poorly defined rules and hierarchical relationships with the staff which may result in residents feeling disrespected. There may be some form of enmeshment in relationships, where there is little autonomy, thus resulting in lack of privacy, weak boundaries, fearfulness of disagreements, and speaking for others (Minuchin et al., 1975). Close relationships with staff, however, may lead to some young homeless adults having preferential treatment, whereas others may feel threatened by paraprofessional staff if they fail to follow program rules (Mayberry et al., 2014).

The transitional housing program have been determined to produce higher success rates. Giffords, Alonso, and Bell (2007) considered outcomes from 44 youths, 66% of whom were African-American, in a transitional program on Long Island, finding that participants achieved independent housing afterwards at a rate of 87%, and that 91% of participants exited the program either employed or in school. Additionally, Nolan (2006) studied the transitional housing program and result shows bolstering support for

transitional housing programs. Similarly, Rasheed (2004) studied 23 youths, where 61% were males, 48% identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and 48% also identified as African-American, in a transitional program in San Francisco and reported that 90% of the youths were able to get into a permanent stable housing program; six months after being discharged from the transitional housing program. Jones (2011) examined the outcomes from 106 youths at a site-based transitional program in Florida. The sample was comprised of 61% females and 76% youth of color, all of whom had exited from foster care, and compared those in the transitional housing program with others who resided in other's living arrangements. Youths who stayed at the transitional housing program were more likely to achieve stable housing and employment, and less likely to use drugs and be arrested, than those who did not participate (Jones, 2011).

These studies led to a conclusion that utilizing the transitional housing program amongst young homeless adults could be very successful. Georgiades (2005) conducted a study using 49 youths from the transitional housing program to determine the effectiveness of utilizing the transitional program and concluded that the transitional housing program has significantly improved outcomes in housing, employment, income, and several other measures. Kroner (2007) discussed the transitional housing program in Cincinnati that served only youth aged 19 and younger and concluded that the transitional housing program was very successful in teaching youths independent living skills and identified some aspects of the design as key success. Kroner also offered several explanations for this assessment, theorizing that youths learn more from transitional housing programs because they more closely resemble future housing settings, encouraging empowerment

and the development of coping tools for loneliness and dealing with neighbors and landlords (Kroner, 2007). In addition, the study conducted by Bartlett et al. (2004) features and agency in rural New England, where the participants are approximately 61% males and 50% youth of color both utilizing the transitional housing program and how they were accepted in some apartments after graduating from transitional program.

Rules and Structure of Transitional Housing Program

Transitional housing programs vary in the way the program rules are structured and how strictly the rules are enforced. Nolan (2006) evaluated the transitional housing program in which roughly half of the participants were eventually expelled for rules violation and considered the program in that study to be successful. This indicates that a high level of rule enforcement might be useful. Study conducted by Giffords et al., (2007) about how transitional housing program has a high relatively degree of structure. This includes but is not limited to curfews and mandatory weekly house meetings and judge them to be effective programs. The studies argued for a program design with tight structure and rules, while other studies reported contradictory results. Study conducted by Georgiades (2005) about transitional programs that has a much looser structure, in part reported high measures of success for the program. Kroner (2007) also advocated for less structure, stating that the positive results produced by the transitional housing program tends to achieve in part a more flexible approach such as allowing overnight guests, and only rarely terminating clients for rules violation. Transitional housing continues to be viewed as a way to assist individuals in addressing the causes of homelessness, enabling individuals to become system fit. According to HUD, transitional housing should provide

temporary residence with supportive services to help people develop the skills necessary for permanent housing. According to four transitional housing programs examined, using the staff in the program, highly structured design rules were credited which include regular drug tests, no overnight guests, and mandatory meeting, have been determined to greatly help the youths succeed in the program (Bartlett et al., 2004). Also, studies show that well-explained system of consequences and accountability is helpful, and it is viewed as the key to young homeless adults' success in the transitional housing program (Bartlett et al., 2004).

Background Information on Factors Relating to Homelessness

Mental Health

Existing research shows that mental and physical health of every individual who is homeless are severely compromised (Al-Tayyib et al., 2014; Bender et al., 2014; Moulton, 2013; Velez et al., 2017). Woods et al. (2013) and Green, Haye, Tucker, and Golinelli, (2013) examined mental disorders among individuals who are homeless and found the rate of affective anxiety disorders, suicide attempts, and substance abuse to have increased among this population. Hetrick, Parker, Robinson, Hall, and Vance (2012) furthered concluded between 20 and 30 percent of individuals who are homeless have suffered from severe chronic mental illness with depression. These authors also noted schizophrenia, psychiatric hospitalization, and depressive symptomologies are mostly present with this population, while older individuals ages 50 and above are prone to suffer from cognitive impairments and depression (Culhane et al., 2013). Ferguson, Kim, and McCoy (2011) and Johnstone (2016) assume economic disadvantage, unhealthy

living conditions, and lack of support to be identified as having posted a severe disadvantage when dealing with mental issues within this population. In addition, they are more likely to be hospitalized in a psychiatric hospital (Hoshide et al., 2011).

Physical Health

Poor health has been found to be common among homeless individuals (Bender, 2012). They are disproportionately linked to high morbidity and mortality rates (Bender, 2012). They are likely to have multiple medical problems, which are more progressive and chronic (Mackelprang, 2015; Velez et al., 2017). In addition, their physical health is compromised due to the psycho-social stressors, as they continue to struggle to survive, maintain safety, and find food and shelter. According to Gambatese et al. (2013), a mortality surveillance study conducted in New York found this population to have a higher rate of 1.5 to 11 times of dying (p. 193). They are attributed to dying prematurely due to poor health, substance abuse, epilepsy, mental illness, etc., when exposed to the elements, such as cold (i.e. hypothermia) and heat (i.e. hyperthermia) (Gambatese et al., 2013; Perron, Cleverley, & Kidd, 2014). This population has a higher prevalence rate of acute infections, musculoskeletal issues, and dermatological diseases (Miller, 2011; Stanhope & Henwood, 2014). They also have a history of physical and sexual abuse and/or sexual risk, resulting in Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome [AIDS] or Human Immunodeficiency Virus [HIV], as well as victimization, and a high suicide rate (Miller, 2011).

Substance Abuse

Substance abuse is one of the pathologies prevalent and severely dominant among this population. Studies identify alcohol and the use of other substances to be a significant risk factor among this population (Bender et al., 2014; Fries et al., 2014; Martino et al., 2011). According to Martino et al. (2011), the distress of being homeless could trigger the abuse of alcohol and other substances to survive and cope with the dire situation. This could lead to seizure disorder, injuries, liver disease, trauma, and nutritional deficiencies (Bender et al., 2014).

Childhood Trauma

Studies have identified homeless individuals to have faced disproportionately higher rates of childhood adversity as discord at home, physical and sexual abuse by familial person's, neglect and abandonment, incarceration, and substance abuse (Ferguson et al., 2012). This is another recurring theme in the literature among homeless young adults. Zolloski and Bullock (2012) said nearly all homeless individuals have suffered some type of trauma in one way or the other and most trauma is attributed to childhood incidents. The traumatic issue encountered among this population creates social isolation, thus leading to homelessness.

Cost Associated With Homelessness

According to Culhane et al. (2013), homelessness touches almost every system and members of society, from policy-makers and businesses to neighborhoods and individuals. Every theory about solutions, stereotypes of causes, as well as programs to fix the problem abound, yet the problem remains. Culhane et al. (2013) said duplicating

existing programs and/or repeating the same strategies are not enough. Though, there may be unique challenges soon, but the actual needs of individuals have to be considered once and for all.

Most studies seemed to focus on pathologies leading individuals to homelessness, yet minimally touched on barriers young adults are experiencing to obtaining available resources to eliminate homelessness. Besides food stamps, the most reported benefit received by this population is the Social Security Insurance (SSI). Most individuals who are homeless have unmet medical needs (Bender et al., 2012; Cronley & Evans, 2017; & Foster et al., 2012). According to Hoshide, et al. (2011), the unmet needs are due to personal, programmatic, bureaucratic, and financial, which serves as barriers to using different services that may be available to them. The U.S. Census 2015b, reported homelessness to have grown in the state of Arizona (Henry et al. (2014). One in every 184 Arizonians has experienced homelessness. Quarterly data presented to the Department of Economic Security reported that 3,862 adults and 3,705 children have received emergency shelter services. The average length of stay in the shelter system is 39 days. These individuals also received public benefits. About 40 percent of these individuals received Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (Culhane et al., 2013). The estimated homeless individuals stated that 40 percent have received the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS). Also, four percent have received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), while five percent have received Temporary Assistance to Needy Families

(TANF) cash assistance, and seven percent have received benefits under the women, infants, and the children (WIC) program (USDHHS, 2013).

Assigning costs to public programs served to homeless individuals could guide the development of measures of value for public interventions (USCM, 2014). Research finds that homeless individuals have diverse experiences and the associated cost to their experiences vary tremendously depending on the pattern of homelessness and family of individual status (Henry et al., 2014). According to Culhane et al. (2013), in all cases of homelessness, the costs associated with providing housing for individuals and families within a program exceeds the fair market rent cost of providing rental assistance without supportive services. In most situations, emergency shelters are usually more expensive than transitional housing and permanent supportive housing, as families are often given private rooms or apartments. An average homeless system cost for individuals is between \$1,634 to \$2,308, while the families are \$3,184 to \$20,031. This is because homeless families tend to stay longer (Howden & Meyer, 2011). Studies show individuals and families who remain in the homeless program longer incur the highest percentage of costs (Wenzel et al., 2016).

By looking at the costs, it is concluded that the transitional housing system has proven to yield an adequate response to an immediate housing crisis for most homeless individuals, despite the cost (Culhane et al., 2013). Cost savings may be realized if transitional supportive housing were more readily available to this population. Transitional housing offers private space and supportive services. Between 2014 and 2015, the transitional housing bed capacity nationally was 81.7 percent (Henry et al.,

2014). Arizona is one of the states whose transitional housing utilization rate is above 90 percent.

Strategies Used in Surviving Homelessness

The NLCHP (2012) has identified homelessness as a major problem on the streets of America for decades. As this population continues to increase, the importance of developing strategies to survive homelessness becomes more critical. They become adamant in developing coping mechanisms, which sometimes may be invisible in surviving the challenges. Coping strategies may be categorized broadly in three diverse ways: active behavioral; active-cognitive; and avoidant. Cameron, Abrahams, Morgan, Williamson, and Henry (2016) specifies that in active behavioral strategies, young homeless adults will directly confront their daily stressors, investigate the different options and resources, and finally create a plan of action. Research shows this direct problem-solving strategy mostly occurs among individuals who have endured extended periods of stress (Cameron et al., 2016). The population in this category will utilize social networking as a strategy of confronting their problems such as doubling up and intermittently living with acquaintances to handle interpersonal difficulties. These individuals now see their situation in the lives of others, which then assists them with developing a sense of comfort and strength, thus reducing an isolative feeling and marginalization (Cameron et al., 2016).

According to Hamby et al. (2015), distancing, endurance, and reframing are considered to be active cognitive coping strategies. These authors stated that distancing oneself from the pressures of daily life have been found to be helpful in coping with

homelessness. Utilizing a passive appraisal as a coping strategy has been seen to be a great endurance (Hamby et al., 2015). These individuals who are encountering homelessness utilize passive appraisal by simply being patient and calm in responding to their homelessness.

Individuals in this category tend to take one day at a time, toning their minds off the situation. These individuals then cope by reframing their situations, which is a great coping mechanism. They then handle their stressful situations by thinking positively, which is an emotional coping strategy. This then will manifest in the form of self-statement where individuals reassure themselves, thus lessening their impact of stress of being homeless, then preserve enough hope to take action and control their situation (Hamby et al., 2015). These individuals utilize prayers and seek spiritual supports, which assist in relieving their burden of homelessness. With this, they develop power in dealing with their tough decisions and have comfort of knowing they are not alone.

According to NCFH (2014), avoidant coping strategies involve the use of drugs and alcohol to dodge expressing themselves and finding distractions. The use of alcohol and other substances have been determined to be highly prevalent among this population. Heavy abuse and use of substances have increased their morbidity and mortality rate (Bender et al., 2012). Among homeless young adults, experiencing substance use is seen as self-medication and support to deal with their situation. Studies show individuals with dependence are more likely to have a history of sexual abuse (Bender et al., 2012). In addition, they use denial as a coping strategy to deal with homelessness (Hamby et al.,

2015). These individuals keep their feelings to themselves, find ways of distracting themselves, and have very low levels of trust in others.

Summary

This chapter utilized Ecological theory to provide better understanding on young homeless adults in utilizing transitional facilities as a coping strategy. Ecological theory provides the best framework for understanding how both individual and societal factors tend to interact when individuals experiencing homelessness is involved. Ecological theory looks at interaction of personal traits with the environment and states that behavior cannot be understood without systemically exploring the stressors and supports present in an individual's context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). From an Ecological perspective, young homeless adults need numerous resources and support systems to navigate daily activities and attain a stable and permanent housing situation (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2014). Transitional housing occupies an intermediate position along the continuum of housing options, and it is intended for individuals who are not ready for or do not have access to permanent housing (Holtschneider, 2016). Young adults have been seen to be one of the key target groups for transitional housing services owing to their age and stage of development (Holtschneider, 2016). Transitional programs reward those who do well by requiring them to move. This program is very effective if affordable independent housing is available to move (Fisher et al., 2014). This chapter reviewed key concepts regarding the experience of young homeless adults utilizing transitional housing facilities.

The conclusion of researchers who support alternative housing models such as the transitional housing programs is that effective housing-based programs work better when

shelter is provided alongside the emotional support, as well as respecting the rights and autonomy of these individuals (Fisher et al., 2014). Studies indicate that when individuals feel respected, they seemed to have a sense of independence, utilize their resources, and feel more satisfied with their situation (Jost et al., 2011). Having the bureaucratic barriers eliminated program's rules that are rigid, extended wait times to the transition into a program, as well as having a better provider interaction could assist in making the experience of seeking out resources and utilizing resources less problematic for homeless individuals (Jost et al., 2011; Petrovich & Cronley, 2015).

In Chapter 3, a discussion of the methodology, the researcher's role, the logic in selecting the participants, procedures for recruitment, participation and data collection, as well as the data analysis plan will be explored.

Chapter 3: Research Method

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of homeless young adults aged 18 to 24 who are using transitional housing. In this chapter, I describe the research method and approaches used in conducting the study. I explain multiple phenomenological designs and the rationale and provide a comparison of qualitative and quantitative research. I also describe the role of the researcher and the participant selection process. In addition, I explain the ways I addressed researcher biases. Data collection methods and data analysis procedures are described. Moreover, issues of internal and external validity, dependability and confirmability, and ethical procedures for the protection of the study participants are addressed.

Research Design and Rationale

The research questions of this phenomenological study were designed to understand the experiences of young homeless adults in using transitional housing. To explore this phenomenon, one question and two subquestions were examined.

Question (Q)1: How do young homeless adults describe their experiences in using transitional housing?

SQ1: How do young homeless adults describe experiences in support programs required for placement in housing?

SQ2: How do homeless young adults describe a successful transitional housing experience?

Most transitional services for the homeless require individuals to receive treatment for substance abuse and mental illness before obtaining housing; otherwise, they cannot be accepted into transitional housing (Moulton, 2013). Individuals who can adhere to the policies of housing and supportive programs may receive stable housing as well as employment services (Wasserman & Clair, 2013). Although research is limited, in part, due to the difficulty in reaching homeless individuals, their experiences using transitional housing services are important for understanding the reasons this population chooses or declines to use transitional housing services (Wasserman & Clair, 2013).

For this study, I used a phenomenological approach to explore the experiences of homeless young adults in using transitional housing. The intent of a phenomenological study is to increase the knowledge of a specific situation (McDowell, Brown, Cullen, & Duyn, 2013). Other qualitative methods and the quantitative approach were considered and found not suitable for this study because I sought to understand the lived experiences of the participants.

A qualitative study differs from a quantitative study in the way information is collected and presented. In a qualitative study, findings are described as opposed to a quantitative study, where tables and figures are used in presenting data (Bansal & Corley, 2012). Researchers can present information gathered from participants in their own words when a qualitative study method is used. This can assist in highlighting concerns of the participants, whereas the association between independent and dependent variables are examined from the hypotheses in quantitative analysis (Appio, Chambers, & Mao, 2013). There are different traditions in qualitative research, and the following five are the most

common: the narrative, grounded theory, case study, ethnography, and phenomenology (Merriam, 2009).

The narrative approach uses stories told by individuals, thus detailing the account of events in a sequential manner based on their understanding of the world around them. Creswell (2013) noted certain defining features when using the narrative approach, such as stories being collected with the intent of conveying a message. According to Holstein and Gubrium (2011), narrative research is mostly referred to as autobiographical, biography, oral history, and life history. This approach was a less useful method for this study in comparison to the phenomenological approach due to the interest I had in the lived experience of many homeless individuals and their experiences in using transitional housing, rather than the participants' life story.

In grounded theory, the result of the study is in developing a theory in which a process of action is explained. Starks and Trinidad (2007) explained grounded theory to be relying on theoretical sampling involving recruiting participants who may have differing experiences of the phenomenon to explore multiple dimensions of the social process under study. Grounded theory uses multiple stages of data collection and comparisons and differences of data (Creswell, 2012). Analysis of textual data could be used when grounded theory observations are involved. This approach was inapplicable to this study because I did not seek to develop a theory but to understand in-depth experiences of young adults who are homeless when using transitional housing. The theoretical sampling of participants with differing experiences did not fit the study's needs.

A case study is used when a researcher wants to gain a deeper understanding or explore a problem using the case as a specific illustration (Creswell, 2013). The unit of analysis in this theory is not limited to individuals but could be ideas, programs, in depth processes, the situation, and the problem. A case study provides a description of a single and/or multiple case. Multiple data collection methods are involved in this approach, and data are triangulated through additional data like artifacts and interviews, thus supporting the information being provided by the participants (Creswell, 2012). The purpose of this research was to understand the essence and shared experience of homeless young adults; therefore, this approach was unsuitable for the study as this was not the main focus of case study.

Ethnography assists in examining the patterns of groups sharing a culture. The ethnography focuses on sharing language, behaviors, norms of the group, and attitudes, but not the culture itself (Creswell, 2012). In ethnography, the group tends to interact with one another over an extended period. The researcher also tends to spend an extensive amount of time to observe the group by becoming immersed into the culture, while observation is being conducted (Creswell, 2013). The ethnographic approach allows the development of a deep understanding of patterns, ideas, and behaviors of the group. The approach was not suitable for this study as I did not immerse myself into the environment of individuals who are homeless due to safety reasons, extensive time commitment, and trust barriers existing amongst this population. An outsider immersing into the congregation of this population would have undermined an ethnographic study as bias could have likely emerged. The authenticity of the behaviors and interactions of the

group members could have been diminished due to the presence of the researcher (Creswell, 2013). In this study, I focused on behaviors or norms, thus making a phenomenological approach a better option.

The intent of a phenomenological study is to increase the knowledge of a specific situation (McDowell et al., 2013). A phenomenological approach is used in a study, particularly when the researcher notices participants to have experienced common encounters (Merriam, 2009). More particularly, a phenomenological approach is used when participants in the study are assumed to have experienced a phenomenon that is similar in nature (Merriam, 2009). According to Creswell (2009), a qualitative approach is used when a phenomenon needs to be understood in context due to a minimal study being conducted to address the issue.

Merriam (2009) further stated that the experiences of participants regarding the phenomenon of interest are condensed, grouped, and compared to determine commonalities and differences among the participants. Phenomenological researchers are expected to describe the underlying structure of the phenomenon, while setting aside their beliefs and/or biases regarding the experience to eliminate personal interferences, which could likely affect the study. Using this approach, I achieved a better understanding by examining the issues through homeless individuals' point of view (see Jonsen & Jehn, 2009). Interviews were recorded, and notes were taken during the interviews (see Patton, 2015).

Using one form of a phenomenological approach transcendental phenomenology allowed for an understanding of the individual and collective experiences of the

participants (see Moustakas, 1994). Transcendental phenomenology allows one to examine the experiences of the shared phenomenon, thus focusing on interpreting the experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas (1994) explained that a phenomenological approach is used when participants have faced similar experiences and are asked to describe their experiences of the phenomenon being studied. The descriptions have to be comprehensive and a basis for analysis, while the data are provided to reflect the experiences of homeless young adults and transitional housing. In a phenomenological study, the participants' experiences regarding the phenomenon of interest are condensed, grouped, and compared in determining commonalities and differences amongst the participants (Merriam, 2009).

A phenomenological approach was used in providing a description of the lived experiences of a group of individuals sharing a common phenomenon, and data were used from one-on-one, semistructured interviews (see Moustakas, 1994). The lived experience of young homeless adults in using transitional housing was the phenomenon studied. Using this research design, data were collected from 15 young adults experiencing this phenomenon. A transcendental phenomenology examines participants' experiences of a shared phenomenon, thus focusing on interpreting the experiences (Moustakas, 1994).

Moustakas (1994) noted that methods and procedures are included in an organized and systemic study when phenomenological research is involved. Accordingly, I established and carried out a series of methods and procedures that met the requirements of this type of study, such as discovering a topic and question being rooted in

autobiographical meaning as well as values and having the social meanings and significance involved. A comprehensive review of the professional and research literature was conducted, and coresearchers who met study criteria were recruited. In addition, coresearchers were provided with instructions on the nature and purpose of the investigation.

Role of the Researcher

As the primary researcher for this study, I examined my personal experience concerning the phenomenon to avoid personal prejudices, beliefs, and perspectives so that participants were not judged. I followed epoche, which necessitates the researcher to look at the experiences of the participants without preconceived ideas (see Moustakas, 1994). My bias and personal feelings, which could have influenced what the participants said, were bracketed. Bracketing is a way where researchers identify their perspectives about a study (Fischer, 2009). Setting aside my personal biases prevented any form of prejudice when reading and analyzing the interviews. As suggested by Moustakas (1994), it is important to refrain from making judgement and avoiding common ways to perceive the comments from the participants. I have worked extensively with homeless individuals; however, I became aware of many of the prejudices and biases that could have affected how I conducted the interviews, the analysis and findings of the study, as well as the observation notes I took during the interview.

In conducting the interviews with this population, I enhanced my listening skills as well as my ability of being open about understanding these young adults in the context of the situation being discussed. I maintained a journal to document my thoughts. My role

was to gather data by interviewing the participants and also to analyze the data. I made sure that I monitored my behavior during the interview sessions, to avoid conveying any personal opinions and ideas to the participants. I welcomed participants speaking freely and organically to obtain better and detailed information in the interview. I interacted with individuals to draw out as much information, without coaxing the participants. I also sought the advice of my chair and the committee members in regard to the analysis of the study findings. I conducted the study in an ethical manner to adhere to Walden research protocols and the Institutional Research Board (IRB). On 06/10/2015, I completed the National Institutes of Health (NIH) web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants” certification number is 1780474. I conducted all the interviews, transcribed the data by using a trained transcriptionist, and analyzed the data. I reviewed all the research protocols and procedures carefully prior to starting the research. My dissertation chair reviewed the IRB application prior to submitting to the IRB committee. I explained the purpose of my study to the study participants as well as how information were gathered. The study participants were notified of their rights to refuse to answer any question. The study participants were informed that they can withdraw their consent to participate at any stage of the interview process. I did not give incentives, but I thanked the participants for their time.

According to Mitchell (2011), a researcher must present as being authentic and transparent. Questions were probed to empower homeless young adults who participate in the study. Manipulations of the participants were avoided. Participants’ rights were respected (Mitchell, 2011). Above all, I refrained from doing anything that may harm

and/or cause distress to the participants in the study. Sufficient time were provided for participants to respond to each interview question, to allow them to reveal their experiences and challenges as young adults who are homeless. The participants were informed that they may freely discontinue participation in the study at any time.

My Personal Identity

I am an African-American woman from an African culture who is very passionate about humanitarian issues. I have worked extensively in the field of counseling and have conducted interviews with individuals from various backgrounds and situations. My listening skills were enhanced as well as the ability to be open and understand individuals in context. I have worked mostly with young adults facing traumatic situations, neglect and substance abuse. I have conducted a significant amount of outreach work through faith-based organizations and work with nonprofit organizations dealing with similar individuals facing similar situation.

My Academic and Educational Background

I hold a Master's degree from Walden University in Marriage, Couple and Family Counseling. Being a current student in the Ph.D. program at Walden University, a number of research methods, quantitative and qualitative reasoning and analysis courses were taken. Moreover, and pertaining to this study, I took courses on ethics and cultural competencies. Skills and knowledge gained from these courses guided my understanding and interpretations of the study about this homeless population. The experiences achieved provided me with the needed skills in conducting this study in an ethical manner that preserved the integrity of the participants, while limiting biases from the study. In

addition, my cultural competencies allowed for sensitiveness to these homeless young adults and homeless individuals in general. I kept a journal in which I documented my biases, thus reminding myself not to judge and set aside any preconceived ideas when reviewing them.

Methodology

Participant Selection

Participants consisted of homeless young adults, both males and females, who were currently homeless, and were living in transitional housing. Their ages ranged from 18 to 24 years and participants were not under any form of influence such as substance use.

I recruited 15 young adults who are homeless and/or living in transitional housing. Choosing this number was suitable to ensure an effective sample size and saturation for the study. It is typical for qualitative studies to utilize small sample sizes (Yin, 2013). According to Yin (2014), anywhere between six and 10 is a sufficient number of participants. According to Mason (2010) and Sharir (2017), saturation determines the sample size in qualitative studies as well as the nature of the study and quality.

To recruit the participants, I obtained a letter of Cooperation (Appendix A) from the transitional program run by the church and post a flyer (Appendix B) in the newsletter in the Phoenix metropolitan area, to announce the study and the criteria for participation. Being a faith-based shelter, the participants were required to read the church newsletter prior to attending church services. Posting this information in the church newsletter

allowed participants to see and have easy access to my information. The flyer contained the criteria for participation and a brief description of the study and my contact information. I asked interested individuals to contact me directly using the contact information provided in the recruitment flyer. Participants were screened when they make contact using a demographic questionnaire (Appendix C). If enough participants were not recruited from one shelter, additional participants would have been recruited from other homeless shelters within the Phoenix metropolitan area. According to Samure and Givens (2008), data saturation is the time in data collection when no new or relevant information is obtained from an additional participant. No additional interviews will be needed if data saturation is achieved.

I used purposive sampling to recruit the participants, as the method allowed the sample to be purposefully informed about the research problem (Knecht & Fischer, 2015; Robinson, 2014). Purposive sampling is also known as judgment, selective, or subjective sampling, as this sampling method is used to ensure that the participants meet the inclusion criteria (Merriam, 2009). Purposive sampling is vital when recruiting participants with the necessary knowledge to address the phenomenon under study (Robinson, 2014). The researcher in this non-probability sampling depends on his/her expertise to invite young adults who are homeless that meet the criteria for the study. Sampling strategy such as this is used when conducting qualitative studies, particularly phenomenological research (Merriam, 2009). The research in purposive sampling must have sufficient knowledge of the phenomenon under study to have appropriate individuals invited to participate (Robinson, 2014). The positive aspects of using

purposive sample are that the appropriate candidates will be recruited for the sample. In case additional participants were needed, the snowball sampling procedure would have been utilized to recruit more participants. In this case, individuals who agreed to participate would have been asked to refer other homeless young adults to participate in the study (Vogt & Johnson, 2011).

Data Collection

Prior to conducting interviews, I received approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Walden University to conduct the study and then I contacted the director of the faith-based homeless shelter to seek permission for a flyer to be posted in the church newsletter to introduce the study. I scheduled an interview appointment with each participant at a mutually agreeable time and place such as a private room in a local library to assure privacy and confidentiality for all participants. Participants were homeless young adults between 18 to 24 years old. All interviews were in person to encourage an open dialogue about their experiences in utilizing transitional housing programs. Interviews were tape recorded. Participants were assured that all information obtained were confidential. All documents, including audio recordings would have been destroyed immediately if they had chosen to stop the interview.

Two copies of the informed consent form were given to the participants to sign. I reviewed the consent form to ensure each participant understood, I had forms signed, gave one to the participant and kept one for my records. The limit to confidentiality was disclosed such as having thoughts of harming themselves and/or thoughts of harming others, child abuse, elder abuse, or any information disclosed about committed or

intending to commit a crime were disclosed to appropriate authorities. Participants were informed of the right to stop the interview at any time without recourse and/or reason for terminating the interview. Participants were informed that the interview will be immediately halted in case they become distressed. I had a list of counselors for referral. No participant had a distressful condition throughout the interviews. All interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes, with time allowed for the participants to add any additional comments, which relates to the study, but not included on the interview questions. Participants were thanked after completing the interview for their time and participation. Information collected from the participants were locked in a cabinet and I was the only one with access. All information on my computer were password protected and I was the only person with access to this information.

I used open-ended semi structured interview questions (Appendix D) in collecting data from the study participants. Using semi structured questions, the predetermined areas of interest were explored (Petty, Thomson, & Stew, 2012). Also, this method allowed the study participants to reflect on their experiences in obtaining transitional housing. In addition, using semi structured interviews gave me the flexibility of changing the direction of the conversation with the participants, while obtaining more information. The information obtained from the dialogue, was a rich thick description of the experience.

Confirmability

Confirmability is similar to objectivity in quantitative research. In this case,

confirmability was established, which refers to the degree to which the findings reflect the participants' intent and meaning (Shelton, 2004). Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that the researcher must be very objective during this phase, so biases were minimized. The situation being studied were reflected in the finding.

To address this issue, an interview protocol was used in conducting interviews (Appendix E). The protocol ensured that all homeless participants were responding to the same questions and all the responses were reviewed after transcription. One-on-one in-depth interviews consisted of a series of open-ended questions to enable participants to speak about their lived experiences in detail and in a candid way. I reflected on my personal biases to control any reaction and/or reactions, which might have impacted the participants' responses. This was accomplished by using bracketing. This involved monitoring my misconceptions by reflecting on them and documenting them with my committee members (Tufford, 2010). A journal was utilized to keep track of the interview time and the place for the interview, as well as the documentation of the body language of the participants and other related information about the participants.

Data Analysis

I used the services of a trained transcriptionist. The transcriptionist was asked to sign a confidentiality form (Appendix F). The audio tape was given to a trained transcriptionist at the end of the interviews to be transcribed. No identifying information was provided with the tapes. All identification was removed before the transcriptionist gets the tapes. Pseudonyms were used in labeling the participants. When a transcribed interview returned, I compared the transcription with the audiotape to check for accuracy

and if necessary, more detail was added from my field notes, to provide clarity.

Information was stored on a password protected USB drive.

Data was analyzed by repeatedly reading the interview transcripts (Moustakas, 1994). This allowed me to develop themes and patterns in the data. The following are the steps Moustakas recommended:

- Listing and Preliminary Grouping

According to Moustakas, (1994), to analyze the interview, the researcher lists every expression that is relevant to the experience (Horizontalization).

- Reduction and Elimination

Reduction and elimination is how the researcher determines the invariant constituents. This is done by testing every expression for two requirements (1) determine if it contains a moment of the experience, which may be necessary and sufficient for better understanding (2) will it be possible for the label to be abstracted? If this is positive, then it is a horizon of the experience. If the expression does not meet the two requirements, then it will be eliminated. In addition, overlapping, repetitive and vague language will have to be eliminated, leaving only the invariant constituents of the experience.

- Clustering and Thematizing the Invariant Constituents

Here the constituents, which are the core themes of the experience were labeled. Clustering and labeled constituents are the core themes of the experience.

- Final Identification of the Invariant Constituents and Themes by Application.

During this step, I checked the invariant constituents and the themes against the complete record of the participants and ask: (a) Are they expressed explicitly in the complete transcript? (b) Are they compatible if not explicitly expressed? (c) If not explicitly expressed or compatible, they are irrelevant to the participants' experience and should be deleted. Using the relevant, validated invariant constituents and themes, I constructed an individual textural and structural description for each participant of the experience (examples from the transcribed interview were included verbatim). The final step was to develop a composite description of the meanings and essences of the experience, representing the group as a whole (pp. 120-121).

According to Creswell (2014), checking the result for any discrepancies and/or nonconforming cases is vital. This allowed information that may contrast with other views of the phenomenon to be provided, resulting in findings that are more realistic and valid. After the initial draft of the findings, member checking was utilized to determine if the researcher's descriptive results are comparable to the experiences with the phenomenon (Creswell, 2014). A copy of a summary of each participant initial findings was sent to the study participants for their comments and to verify for accuracy and provide additional information if needed.

Trustworthiness

Yin (2010) postulates that in building trustworthiness, three objectives should be met. The research procedures were transparent. This allowed others to examine the data as well to have evidence that support the conclusion of the study. The study participants were asked the same questions and their responses were transcribed. The study

participants had the chance to clarify any comments made. Trustworthiness of data and quality were verified by using reliability and validity measures to ensure credibility. To verify trustworthiness, credibility was essential, which is the extent to which findings reflect reality (Merriam, 2009). The study was conducted methodically, specific procedures were followed to avoid biases. The study was based on strict evidence and evidence is expressed by using the actual language of the study participants.

Internal Validity (Credibility)

Internal validity is very important when qualitative research is used. Credibility is a way of being consistent, while providing evidence to show that the study has been done (Merriam, 2009). To establish credibility, each participant was given a summary of their transcript. By doing this, a rich description of the experiences of the participants about the phenomenon was established (Creswell, 2009). To maintain credibility, field notes were maintained, entries were made regularly, and thoughts were documented throughout the research process. A reflective journal to document my thoughts was maintained throughout the process. In ensuring the validity, my dissertation committee reviewed questions.

External Validity (Transferability, Generalizability)

External validity involves the issue of generalizing study results (Yin, 2014). For generalizability to be enhanced, the use of rich thick description is recommended. This method requires the researcher to provide a rich description of the setting and the study findings (Merriam, 2009). I recruited from one program and would have reached out to other programs if more participants were needed to achieve saturation.

Transferability, which is sometimes referenced to as generalizability was limited to the study sample, while reliability was assured by using the audio recorder to record the interviews and taking of detailed field notes. Reflexive journaling allowed the researcher to capture personal thoughts, feelings, insights, and potential biases, which might have emerged during the study.

Dependability

Dependability was established, which is the stability of the research process. Dependability shows that what was planned was conducted. According to Polit and Beck (2016), dependability symbolizes the findings being a representation of the participants' lived experiences with the phenomenon that is being studied. This does not reflect the researcher's viewpoints, beliefs, theories or biases. Triangulation involved using different sources in verifying information to minimize the degree of specificity or dependence of methods, which might limit the validity or scope of the study (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008).

Ethical Procedures

This study was conducted under Walden Institutional Review Board (IRB) permission and approval. Disclosure about the study were provided to the participants, including potential risks, the limits to confidentiality, and commitment of time. The participants were presented with the consent form in written format, which were verbally explained to avoid any literacy barriers. This form also clearly stated their right to refuse to answer question/(s) if they feel uncomfortable. In addition, it included that the participant could withdraw from the study at any time if desired and the information will

totally be destroyed. Contact information also was provided to participants in case they have questions.

Documents were stored in a locked cabinet at the researcher's home when not in use. The cabinet and the electronic media such as the laptop had password protection. I was the only person that has access. Data was presented in pseudonyms, which matched the labels on the audio tapes. The paper copies of the interview transcripts will be destroyed after five years as recommended by the IRB, while data stored in USB drive will be deleted from the drive using a shredder program.

Vulnerable Participants

Since the IRB considers the homeless population to be a vulnerable population, additional consideration was taken in ensuring this study follows all the required recommendations. Vulnerable populations are individuals considered by IRB guidelines to be in crisis. In this particular case, I had a list of available counselors in case the participant became distraught in describing their experiences.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore the experiences of young homeless adults who are utilizing transitional housing. A one-on-one in-depth interview was conducted using 10 to 15 homeless young adults, living in transitional housing. I collected some basic demographic information to describe my population and also used a phenomenological approach to understand the lived experiences faced by young homeless adults. Data analysis followed Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological process of

analyzing data. Trustworthiness of data and quality were verified by using reliability and validity measures to ensure credibility.

Using the lens of the researcher, a deeper understanding of the barriers to utilizing transitional housing emerged, thus providers and homeless advocates may reevaluate their outreach toward this population and improve services. This in turn may result in social change as the number of individuals who are homeless may be reduced, while they will obtain the assistance they need.

In chapter 4, the findings of the phenomenological study were provided. Information about the interview setting, data collection, participants, data management, and data analysis are presented in detail.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the experiences of young homeless adults aged 18 to 24 who are using transitional housing. I used one-on-one semistructured interviews to explore and gain a better understanding of the experiences of young homeless adults in using transitional housing. The ecological theory was the framework for the study, and the following research questions and subquestions were answered:

RQ1: How do young homeless adults describe their experiences in using transitional housing?

SQ1: How do young homeless adults describe their experiences in support programs required for placement in housing?

SQ2: How do homeless young adults describe a successful transitional housing experience?

Chapter 4 includes an overview of the setting, participant demographics, data collection procedures, data analysis, evidence of trustworthiness, and a presentation of the results. Additionally, I summarize the interpretation of the emerging themes from the analysis of the interviews with support from the participants' reflections of their experiences of being homeless and using transitional housing.

Research Setting

I recruited participants from a local homeless shelter and conducted interviews at a mutually agreeable time in a private room at a local library. Using the local library was

convenient and easily accessible, and there were no interruptions, violations of confidentiality, or any other external events that could potentially affect the data collection and/or the results of the study. All who took part in the study did so voluntarily.

Demographics

Fifteen homeless young adults with varied levels of experience seeking transitional housing were interviewed for the study. I used a phenomenological design to explore the experiences of young homeless adults aged 18 to 24 who are using transitional housing. All participants met the following criteria: (a) 18 to 24 years of age, (b) not involved with alcohol abuse or use of illegal substances, and (c) homeless and living in transitional housing. To protect their identity, I assigned each participant a code number, which is used throughout Chapters 4 and 5. Table 1 presents the demographic data of the participants.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Participants	Age	Gender	Ethnicity	Length of time in transitional housing	Length of homelessness
1	24	Male	White	1 year	2 years
2	18	Female	White	9 months	2 years
3	18	Male	Hispanic	1 year	2 years
4	23	Female	White	2 years	3 years
5	24	Male	white	13 months	2 years
6	23	Male	White	1 year	4 years
7	24	Female	White	4 months	8 months
8	24	Male	Hispanic	4 months	7 months
9	22	Female	White	6 months	1 year
10	22	Female	White	14 months	3 years
11	23	Male	White	1 year	2 years
12	24	Male	White	9 months	2 years
13	19	Female	White	2 months	6 months
14	21	Female	Hispanic	11 months	4 years

15	23	Male	African-American	1 year	3 years
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Data Collection

I obtained approval and permission from the IRB at Walden University to conduct the study. The IRB approval number was 09-25-18-0146443. I contacted the transitional housing facility to place a flyer in the newsletter to introduce the study (See Appendix B). The flyer included a brief description of the study and my contact information for interested participants who were homeless and living in the transitional housing. When contacted by individuals expressing interest, I explained the study to them, including the study's purpose and what would be expected of them. I obtained demographic information from participants who agreed to be interviewed using the survey (see Appendix C). Once I determined that they met the criteria, I asked if they were still interested in the study. Upon receiving an affirmative statement from the volunteers, dates and times were scheduled for the interview. A meeting was scheduled individually with the participants in a private room at the local library where I conducted semistructured interviews. All 15 of the recruited participants showed up for the interviews.

Participants were assured that all information obtained in the interviews would be kept confidential and that no individual would be identified in the final report. All interviews were face to face to provide an environment for an open dialogue. After verifying all the information, I gave two copies of the consent form to each participant to sign. After encouraging participants to ask questions regarding their participation in the

study, I asked them to sign both copies of the consent form, retaining one copy for their records. I interviewed each participant once, and the duration of these one-on-one interviews ranged from 60 to 70 minutes. All interviews were audio recorded with the consent of the participants.

To capture any insight or observations during the interview process, I took detailed field notes about body language, facial expressions, and other specific information relevant to the interview. None of the scheduled participants withdrew from the study. There were no unusual circumstances during the data collection process. Each interview followed the same procedures. There were no significant deviations from the interview topic and no interruptions. The digital recorder, signed forms, and the reflexive journal were kept in a locked cabinet in my home when not in use.

The interviews consisted of semistructured questions (see Appendix D) that I asked to obtain information regarding experiences of young homeless adults aged 18 to 24 who are using transitional housing. I asked all participants the same core questions during the interviews. In addition to the core questions, I asked probing questions to obtain additional information and clarify any ambiguous responses. Through this process, rich, in-depth information on the topic was collected.

Data Analysis

Moustakas's (1994) phenomenological steps were used for this study in analyzing the data. After collecting the data, a trained transcriptionist was used to transcribe the data. In order to gain better understanding of the main information shared by the participants in the interviews, the transcribed interviews were read repeatedly. Data were

organized by sorting and coding according to the themes that emerged from the data. Using this process, I abstracted and labeled the statement for its significance. By so doing, an interpretation of the deeper meaning of the data was created. All discrepancies that could have contradicted the findings were checked during data analysis process.

Here are the first four steps I used, as prescribed by Moustakas (1994) listed in the following sections.

1. Listing and preliminary grouping: Per Moustakas (1994), to analyze the interview, I listed every expression that was relevant to the participants' experience using the process of horizontalization. To determine the invariant constituents, I reviewed the data. Each statement was carefully considered to determine its significance to the experiences of young homeless adults who are using transitional housing. The statements were tested to determine if they included a part of the experience that was necessary and sufficient for understanding it. I abstracted and labeled the statement for its significance, eliminating unnecessary codes. Statements that did not meet the requirements were eliminated.
2. Reduction and elimination: After listing each statement relevant to the phenomena, I tested every expression to begin narrowing the list of codes into categories against two requirements. Expressions that contained a moment of experience that was necessary and the sufficient constituents for understanding were then abstracted and labeled (invariant constituents). Statements that did not meet the requirements were

eliminated, as well as statements that were vague, repetitive, and overlapping, leaving only the invariant constituents of the experience.

3. Clustering and thematizing the invariant constituents: After establishing a list of categories (invariant constituents), I then combined similar categories into clusters under thematic labels. These clustered statements into groups allowed themes to emerge. The initial emerging themes became the core themes of the experience. I labeled the core themes of the experiences.
4. Final identification of the invariant constituents and themes by application: I tested each category (invariant constituents) and core themes of the study against the data I gathered from each participant. I made sure the categories and themes were compatible to what was expressed explicitly for each participant. I then combined the themes to determine the experiences of the participants that were common to all. The outliers were also considered as they represented a different view of the situation that could be significant in understanding the lived experiences of young homeless adults using transitional facilities.

The fifth step details the modified approach I used in analyzing the data in the present study. I revisited the data iteratively throughout the analysis to refine and reflect on my experiences during the interview process and to examine how that informed the development of themes. A system of organization for data analysis resulted in the grouping and coding of the data into horizons or main ideas. Themes were identified

from this organized data such as (a) length of stay/moving around, (b) rules/fear for personal safety, (c) abusive staff/staff prejudice, (d) lack of support, (e) networking with others/supportive staff, and (f) provide resources.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I employed several strategies to ensure that the data was trustworthy.

Credibility

Credibility is a way of being consistent, while providing evidence to show that the study has been done and reality reflected (Merriam, 2009). I obtained credibility by providing assurance that my interpretations reflected the participants' descriptions and lived experience of the phenomenon (see Creswell, 2014).

To ensure credibility, I maintained field notes and reflexive journaling throughout the interview to document my thoughts. Palaganas, Sanchez, Molintas, and Caricativo (2017) noted that a researcher must be reflective during the study to avoid being judgmental from research. Therefore, I used reflective journaling to capture my thoughts, impressions, insights, and emotions that were invoked in any way. By using the epoche method, I bracketed personal biases such as: avoiding assumptions, setting aside my personal feelings, experiences, and preconceived notions about the research topic and the population in question, so as not to impact interpretation and findings.

According to Waters (2015), transferability is an in-depth description of lived experience of a selected group. I addressed transferability by using participants who were homeless and living in transitional housing facilities. By so doing, I was able to provide in-depth description of the themes that had emerged from the data.

Dependability is the stability of the research process. Dependability shows that what was planned was conducted. Dependability indicates that the findings are representation of the participants' lived experiences with the phenomenon being studied and did not reflect the researcher's viewpoints or biases (Polit & Beck, 2016). In collecting and analyzing the data to establish dependability, I used an audit trail to details the chronology of research activities and processes.

In establishing dependability in this study, an audit trail was used following these steps:

1. I posted a flyer in the church newsletter to introduce the study.
2. I asked interested individuals to contact me directly using the contact information I provided in the recruitment flyer.
3. I contacted the participants who indicated their interest in participating in the study.
4. I screened participants when they made contact using a demographic questionnaire.
5. I scheduled an interview appointment with each participant at a mutually agreeable time and place such as a private room in a local library to assure privacy and confidentiality for all participants.
6. I gave each participant two copies of the informed consent form to sign. I also reviewed the consent form to ensure each participant understood, have forms signed give one to the participant and keep one for my records.

7. I conducted the interview in person to encourage an open conversation about the experiences of young homeless adults aged 18 to 24 who are utilizing transitional housing.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that conformability is established based on how the person reading the report interprets the findings of the study and not the researcher's predispositions, concerns, or interests. Conformability was addressed in the present study by asking each participant in the study the same questions in the same order. My personal feelings and biases were bracketed to minimize any reactions to the responses that could have influenced the participant's answers to the interview questions.

Findings

After reading the interview transcripts multiple times, certain themes began to emerge. The emerging themes were grouped by research question presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Themes

Research questions	Themes
RQ1. How do homeless young adults describe their experiences in utilizing transitional housing?	a) Length of stay/moving around b) Rules/fear for personal safety
SQ1. How do young homeless adults describe experiences in support programs required for placement in housing?	c) Abusive staff/staff prejudice d) Lack of support
SQ2. How do homeless young adults describe a successful transitional housing experience?	e) Networking with others/supportive staff f) Provide resources

I developed one research question and two sub questions to guide this study.

Three interview questions addressed the first research question: How do young homeless adults describe their experiences in utilizing transitional housing? I will begin this section by presenting a summary of the major responses for the first three interview questions.

The first interview question was the following: How long have you been in transitional housing? and how many times have you been in a transitional housing setting? Responses to this question varied across 15 participants. The themes included, length of stay/moving around as well as rules/fear for personal safety. “I am always in and out of transitional housing, my stay is always short, I was kicked out the last time I was here, I recently returned here because I needed a place to stay.”

Participant 14 stated that she has been homeless for years and she has been in different transitional houses, but this particular transitional housing is different from others due to the services she is receiving from the workers at the facility.

The second interview question was this: How did you learn about transitional housing? Responses to this question were mostly consistent. The responses included: “my case manager told me, I referred myself, I learn about transitional housing through peer connection, and I personally research on the internet.” When asked the third interview question, describe how the information assisted you in entering transitional housing. Responses to this question became more focused. The participants said,

With the information, I started planning of leaving the streets, I started cleaning up my behavior, I stopped drinking and using drugs, I called for intake to get into

transitional housing, I went out to the facility to ask for a bed. I used the information to connect with supports.

Participant 5 said, “My case manager told me that if I don’t clean up, I will not be accepted in this transitional housing. So, I stopped doping knowing that when I go, they would want to test me.”

The second set of three research question from Sub-question 1 was asked to obtain information on how young homeless adults describe experiences in support programs required for placement in housing. The responses to these three interview questions are presented.

The first interview question asked the participants to describe what has been their experience in transitional support housing. The themes included, abusive staff/staff prejudice and lack of support. These were the participants’ responses: “there are many challenges daily in this place, there are so many rules to follow, there are many safety concerns in transitional housing, the staff here are very strict, sometimes I feel lost and confused in this place. You don’t know who to trust here, I am afraid of being stigmatized, I feel very vulnerable being here, I learn how to be flexible and how to motivate myself.”

The second interview question asked the participants to describe their experience with support staff in transitional support housing. The question provoked varied comments including these: “The staff here are very rude. I have to endure verbal and emotional abuse, staff are very rigid, the staff here simply label you as homeless person, the staff here will talk down at you.” The third interview question asked the participants

to describe the problems or challenges they experienced in working with the staff at the transitional support housing facility. The responses to this question were more aligned with the last question. The participants added this: “The staff here are bullies, the staff likes to call you names, some staff here are good, and some are bad.”

The third set of three research questions from sub-question two was to obtain information on how homeless young adults would describe a successful transitional housing experience. The themes included, networking with others/supportive staff and provide resources. These were the responses to the 3 interview questions presented:

The first interview question asked this: What services or experiences help to support you in transitional housing? The participants indicated, “you will not survive without networking here, the groups here are very empowering, and case managers advocate for us.”

The second interview question asked: how would you describe a successful transitional housing experience? In response, the participants indicated the following: “The staff need more training, we need more experienced staff here, we need more and current resources, we need more easy and accessible information here, we need more beds in transitional facilities, and we need more transitional facilities state wide.” The third interview question asked was this: Based on your experiences, what is the most serious concern or issues you are facing living in transitional housing? This question indicated a consensus among the participants. The participants said, “we want to see more secured environment, our safety is a paramount concern, there should be a little flexible on the rules, I think we should be treated as humans and respected, we should be

allowed to stay longer without being kicked out to find a permanent housing, finding a permanent housing should not be this hard, we need more outreach, engagement, and intensive care, we need ongoing rehabilitation services, we want the staff to recognize our strengths.”

Results

Based on the research question and sub-questions, the following themes emerged related to the questions. The themes were: Length of stay/moving around, rules/fear for personal safety, abusive staff/staff prejudice, lack of support, networking with others/supportive staff, and provide resources. These themes will be introduced, and quotes will be provided verbatim from participants to support each theme.

Theme 1: Length of Stay/Moving Around

At the beginning of the interviews, the participants were asked a series of questions to gather some demographic and background information. One of the questions asked was how long have you been in transitional housing? All participants responded that their time has been short, and they are always on the move. Participant 7 reported,

I prefer staying outside when the temperature is not dangerous. I only come here when the temperature gets to 3 digits. Then I don't have to deal with these people. They are too proud for my liking. They give you a number, when it is 99 degrees, being very hot in the summer. If the number is “flag”, you cannot get in anyway. Your number is either too high or too low, sometimes you don't have a chance to get in at all. So, I don't go to shelter like that anymore. I just keep moving around.

When asked how many times have participants have been in a transitional housing setting? There was variation in the type of responses which ranged from multiple times, two to four times, and back and forth. Participant 11 reported,

I come and go as I please. The program is too pushy for me, too regimented. They want you to change by force. There is no win with it. You are better off on your own. So, I'd rather be independent and stay out of people's way. I just have to do what it takes to help myself.

To answer the next question of how participants learn about transitional housing, responses to this question were mostly consistent. The responses were from being directed by their case managers, to peer connection, and through internet research. The participants reported the role their case managers played in getting them into transitional housing, to prevent them from being homeless. They reported how their case manager assisted in assessing their situations and in helping them plan and providing them with vital information to help them get into transitional housing facilities and maintain their housing. Participant 15 added,

I wouldn't be here without the help of my case manager. I was struggling while on the street. I felt hopeless, and one day, I went to one clinic to get my medication and I met this guy who worked up to me and introduced himself as my case manager. I kind of threw all my problems on him. He was very sympathetic to my problems. We bonded, and he started carrying my burden, since then... I am blessed.

Participant 11 said,

My case manager and I bonded immediately. He came searching for me on the street one day and gave me a whole bunch of papers to sign. One day he showed up again and said... follow me, I have a place for you to go. I was scared at first, but I followed him to this facility. I have been here since then and he is helping me with my SSI as well.

Participant 10 commented,

I heard that sleeping on the church property was the safest place to sleep without being attacked at night, so I started coming around the facility to sleep on the property, until one staff saw me one day and took me into the facility and gave me a bed and food. After spending a couple of nights, I decided, I was not going back to the streets.

Participant 7 commented,

Well, I heard that sleeping at the property will allow me to be at the organization early enough to get in line, I mean as early as 5am to get breakfast and other resources I needed. You know, there are so many people looking for the same thing, so you have to be smart about it, and that is what I did until, they actually took me in and gave me a bed one day. I was shocked.

Theme 2: Rules/Fear for Personal Safety

All participants described the challenges they face, which includes poorly defined rules and hierarchical relationships with staff resulting in participants feeling disrespected. They reported that rules have to be strictly followed, violating these rules is grounds for dismissal from the program. Participant 1 stated, “You are dead when you

break the rules here... you don't really know what to expect from then going forward. You will be written up on unnecessary things. Some staff have the shortest patience ever.”

Participant 6 commented, “My first time of being here, I was caught smoking pot and drinking alcohol, I was kicked out. This time coming back and having the chance again, I want to make it right.”

Participant 12 reported,

I was kicked out the first time due to anger issues. One of the guys reported that I was aggressive toward him. The staff wrote me up and sent me to counselling for anger management. It did not work for me at that time. I am back. I suffered a lot when I was out on the street. I was verbally and physically abused. Now, I have to make sure I follow the rules, so they can keep me longer, while I search for a job and permanent housing.

Participant 2 commented,

Well, most of the staff are just people. There are there for their check. They are really not personable individuals. Not that they are disrespectful toward us, but they are just there. “You have to obey the rules here ... this is the most important aspect to form relationships with staff and residents.

Participants discussed safety as being very important to them while in the transitional facility. When asked about safety for utilizing the transitional facility. The participants indicated some safety concerns about their physical and mental health. All the participants reported feelings of depression, hopelessness, and frequent thought of

suicide. They complained of inability to bring in visitors due to safety concerns. They complained of not having privacy as they tend to share common areas and sometime bedrooms and bathrooms. They also complained of the amount of living space, safety of the neighborhood, as well as their units.

Participant 9 emotionally stated,

Being homeless sucks and living in transitional housing is not different... everybody is an island. I'm surrounded by a sea of sharks, and everywhere is getting more and more conservative every year. I feel like I have just been so beat up by so much bureaucratic crap. And instead of being someone's bureaucratic crap, I turn it inwards and I'm just beating myself up and making it harder to walk into any doors and do stuff.

All participants reported to have experienced many challenges daily in the facility. They also stated rules to be enormous and they have to follow all the rules. They reported maximum safety concerns in transitional housing and the staff being very strict. They reported that sometimes they feel lost and confused in their transitional facility.

Participants 7, 13, and 14 reported,

You don't know who to trust here, I am afraid of being stigmatized, I feel very vulnerable being here, I learn how to be flexible and how to motivate myself. We want to see more secured environment, our safety is a paramount concern, there should be a little flexible on the rules, I think we should be treated as humans and respected, we should be allowed to stay longer without being kicked out to find a permanent housing, finding a permanent housing should not be this hard, we need

more outreach, engagement, and intensive care, we need ongoing rehabilitation services, we want the staff to recognize our strengths.

The participants were asked the set of three interview question from sub-question one, how do young homeless adults describe experiences in support programs required for placement in housing? From responses to sub-question one, two different themes emerged from the interviews. These themes were: abusive staff/staff prejudice and lack of support.

Theme 3: Abusive Staff/Staff Prejudice

Participants reported to have been emotionally and verbally abused by the staff at the transitional housing facilities. “The staff are very strict when we bring friends to our rooms. They have mandated rules that we have to follow, otherwise your time will be shortened.” Participants reported that staff want them to do what they say and not what they do. They want you to get a job and a permanent housing.

Participant 7 stated,

Most of the staff are good, while others are very strict to us. I believe they are trying to help us. At times they have unruly people and dirty people, so they have to be strict. The staff need to work a little harder to develop a more strategic approach to understand us.

Participant 13 said,

Staff will threaten to have you leave the program. They act like the money is coming out of their pockets for you to live here.” They talk down to you and act

as if they are better than you, they don't listen to your complaints, they expect you to do as you're told. They call you homeless...this is what you do.

Theme 4: Lack of Support

Most participants complained that they lack support from staff, the society, the laws, and the public as a whole. They reported that being homeless is a crime and they could be arrested just for being homeless and charge them for trespassing. Participants reported to have taken actions to prevent being arrested. Participants 1, 3, 4, 12, 13, and 15, reported that prior to getting a bed at the transitional facility, they were very cognizant of where they sleep to avoid being arrested. Participants reported to have been treated poorly, threatened by staff, humiliated by staff, and are called different derogatory names by the staff. Participants reported that the facility staff does not support them.

Participant 1 reported,

To get information from the staff is a big thing, they belittle you and make you feel inferior around them.

Some participants spoke about the permanent impact of homelessness on their personality, stereotyping, low self-worth, physical and psychological life. Participants 1, 5, 6, 9, 11, and 14, reported being considered negatively and being discriminated against. They reported that being at transitional housing facilities make them feel very vulnerable. They reported being deeply discredited and being reduced from normal to tainted and discounted persons. Some participants reported that most staff are afraid of them because they are unknown to them and blame them for their situation and rate them as not being worthy of help. The participants also indicated that being homeless make them feel like

the world does not care about them, thus feeling less than a whole human being.

Participants reported, that they have to be flexible and give up something to get something. They have to balance their independence by relying on others. They reported being pressured to obey the regulations. They reported that what they all need is to have someone who could help them quickly and be treated with dignity. They also reported that they want workers at the facility to recognize their individual needs and their potential vulnerability. They reported that most of them have no idea about the application process to get jobs and the get permanent housing.

Participants 11 lamented saying,

We want the staff to help us rather than push us to change overnight. We want them to treat us as human and give us clear explanations of the requirements promptly, fairly, and supportively, rather than telling us our crisis is not their emergency.

Participant 15 reported,

The staff at the transitional housing wants us to resolve our crisis first before they could help us secure a safe and permanent homes that met our individual needs.

The third set of three interview question from sub-question two were asked to obtain information on how homeless young adults describe a successful transitional housing experience? Responding to interview question from sub-question two, the following two themes emerged from the interviews, such as: networking with others/supportive staff and provide resources.

Theme 5: Networking With Others/Supportive Staff

All the participants reported that networking is crucial and very beneficial to every homeless person. According to the participants, despite some staff being rude and disrespectful to them, they still believe that transitional housing has helped them to live healthily and be productive. Participants also reported that they are able to support one another, get help, find resources, and help each other who are in crisis situation through networking. They want the staff to recognize and create opportunities to assist them in fostering existing positive relationships.

Participant 8 shared,

We did not get to where we are today by grit, hard work, and determination alone, but through combination of hard work and helpful connections. Being on the street is like an addiction. You get addicted to the streets just like getting addicted to a lifestyle or drugs. It's a jungle when you are on the streets...it's crazy. Anything can happen to you at any time when you are homeless, you have to know what you are doing. If not, you may not make it. Sometimes, you may make it mentally, but you may not make it physically. It is an experience you don't want to have. I have seen people that come to homelessness, and they just can't handle it. I have seen people talked to me just like you right now and a month later they don't know who I am. Nothing surprises me...I have seen it all...it's a crazy experience. You always have to be one step ahead, know who you can go to for support. I mean when you are out on the streets, there are people that will get

you. Literally get you in trouble, so you have to watch p's and Q's, especially, if you do not have support resources.

Participant 6 said,

It has been a joyful ride for me to actually see people trying and encouraging each other. Our goal is to get outta' here and better ourselves so that we can do better... I think this is a good thing.

Supportive staff. Participants reported how they are empowered by some staff and their case managers in a number of ways. Through this empowerment, they are able to build trust, stand up for themselves, and take responsibility for their actions. They reported being able now to practice trusting their relationships with their staff. They could now identify their problems and take control of solving them.

Participant 14 reported,

I have been betrayed by so many people in my life. It was difficult for me at first to trust anyone. Talking to my case manager has empowered me to believe that there are some few good people in this world. Even though it is still hard for me, but I am taking it slow to trust again.

Participant 10 stated,

I am still struggling with trust issues. I don't know when I will overcome this, but I like my staff and my case manager, we have this emotional bond in a way. They come true for me every time, and they always asked me to trust them. I guess I should trust them.

The participants reported that the program will work better if the retrained the staff in assisting them while at the transitional facility. They also reported that through training, staff will be able to conduct themselves in a better way, respect their needs and them as humans, help them plan and prepare them in transitioning to a permanent housing. They also reported that staff will be able to address any obstacle that may occur during their stay in transitional housing.

Participant 11 reported,

We are all going through the same thing, and we have to build that relationship with other residents, and we encourage one another. Some people are good-hearted, great people that have fallen, and we all need to get ourselves back up. We want some form of intervention to resolve our situation and more awareness to achieve our goals, not just advice.

Theme 6: Provide Resources

Comments about these perceptions of resources were swift among the participants. The participants responses in regard to resources were very consistent depending on their circumstances. All participants agreed that they need current resources to guide them in searching for permanent housing.

According to Participant 3,

I know a lot of stuff is going on around here, but when you first get a shelter, the staff knows things that I don't know, so it would be helpful if you are guided to more and better resources. Instead, they have old and irrelevant information on their boards.

Participant 15 reported,

The housing list is so long. You have to wait years to get housing. The staff told me once to go and apply for permanent housing. I went and there were like thirty people in line waiting to fill out applications and the woman told me that I had to wait until they had all filled out their applications. I had other things I needed to do, so I could not wait there forever just to get an application form. There is a lot of red tape. For guys, it is different in comparison with females, the system should be faster, and more current resources should be available, you know.

Summary

Information provided in this chapter focused on exploring the experiences of young homeless adults aged 18 to 24 who are utilizing transitional housing. I conducted interviews in a private room at a local library. The participants all used transitional housing facilities. Of the 15 homeless young adults who participated in the study, seven were female and eight were male. Five participants indicated they were moving in a couple of weeks to permanent housing. Two indicated being awarded scholarship to complete pastoral college education.

They ranged in age from 18 to 24 years. Eleven participants were Caucasian, three were Hispanic, and one was African-American. Six have been homeless for 2 years, three have been homeless for three years, two have been homeless for four years, one has been homeless for one year, one has been homeless for eight months, one has been homeless for seven months, and one has been homeless for six months. The participants length of time in transitional housing ranged from two months to fourteen months. After

reading and re-reading the interviews several times and coding them to determine similarities and differences, two themes emerged from responses related to question one, two themes emerged from responses related to sub-question one and two themes emerged from responses related to sub-question two.

The participants in this study provided a clear account of their experiences in utilizing transitional housing. These participants appeared to be upbeat, resilient, hopeful, and optimistic. They also elaborated the barriers preventing them from living a productive life in their transitional placements and the strategies they utilized in surviving homelessness. Results indicate that while young adults were familiar with transitional program, and their availability, the ability to find accommodation eluded them. Long waiting, the red tape, and housing policies seemed to be discouraging them and caused them to give up on housing as a whole. Participants discussed how time constraints imposed by shelter and housing programs affected their lives and their decisions to look for work or to look for housing. Participants placed more emphasis on the essentiality of having bus passes to get to their appointments, job interviews, and other services.

In Chapter 5, I will provide a brief overview of themes along with the literature that pertains to them. Implications for the practice and social change will also be presented. The chapter will end with recommendations for further research on this topic.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Introduction

I used a phenomenological research design to understand the experiences of young homeless adults aged 18 to 24 who are using transitional housing. Homelessness is a significant problem in the United States, with currently an estimated 222,197 individuals experiencing homelessness at any given time (HUD, 2013). Homelessness has resulted in additional risks among young adults (Yu et al., 2012). Increased knowledge of providers, social support networks, and the strengths, challenges, and suggestions of these young adults may help better intervention and other services for homeless individuals.

Fifteen young homeless adults met the inclusion criteria to participate in semistructured, face-to-face interviews for this study. The participants had a minimum of 6 months to a maximum of 4 years of homeless experience. The rationale for choosing this topic was to address the gap in the literature regarding the use of transitional housing to provide temporary housing for young adults who are experiencing homelessness.

To accomplish this, eight semistructured open-ended questions were asked to residents of a transitional housing facility to collect data from participants. I audio-recorded the interviews using a digital recorder. A certified transcriptionist was used to transcribe the resulting data. Moustakas's (1994) data analysis techniques were used as a guide. I analyzed the interview transcripts, and the analysis of participants' responses to the eight interview questions produced six themes: (a) length of stay/moving around, (b) rules/fear for personal safety, (c) abusive staff/staff prejudice, (d) lack of support, (e)

networking with others/supportive staff, and (f) providing resources. These six themes emerged relative to the research question and subquestions of which were as follows:

RQ1: How do young homeless adults describe their experiences in using transitional housing?

SQ1: How do young homeless adults describe their experiences in support programs required for placement in housing?

SQ2: How do homeless young adults describe a successful transitional housing experience?

Ecological theory, developed by Bronfenbrenner in 1994, was used in this study as a lens through which to examine the experiences of young homeless adults aged 18 to 24 who are using transitional housing. The use of ecological theory allowed me to examine participant responses within five systems of interconnected relationships that impact an individual's life (see Bronfenbrenner, 1979a). These five systems are the micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono system. The use of this framework allowed me to better understand participants' progress in transitional housing as it related to other societal issues impacting individuals.

The participants discussed length of stay and moving around as being essential when using transitional facility to avoid dealing with staff and the other peers. They presented staff as being too proud and dismissive of their feelings. They also reported that staff at the transitional facility were biased, as they tended to play favoritism, even under a scorching heat. The participants reported the transitional program as being pushy and too regimented. They were afraid that staff at the facility wanted them to change by

all means. Most participants reported their case managers as being the brain behind their stay in transitional facilities. They believed their case managers worked magic into getting them into transitional facilities. They recalled their struggles while on the streets and different stories they heard prior to being in transitional facilities. Some participants embraced the idea of being in transitional facilities while others completely dismissed this idea.

Participants reported rules and fear for personal safety as being the main challenges they faced in transitional facilities. They believed rules were poorly defined, and some peers seemed to have hierarchical relationships with staff, which resulted in staff being biased and disregarding the feelings of other residents. Participants reported that they would be dismissed from the facility if rules were violated in any way. They also reported that some staff were short tempered and impatient. The participants reported feelings of depression, hopelessness, and frequent thoughts of suicide. They complained of lack of privacy, inability to bring visitors, and having to share living spaces with others. They wanted rules to be flexible and to be treated with respect and dignity. They also wanted to be given more time at the facility to search for jobs and a permanent place to live.

The participants reported staff being abusive and prejudicial toward them, wanting to force them to abide by their mandated rules. They reported that if they failed to abide by the rules, their stay at the transitional facilities would be shortened. They also reported that staff acted as if the money used for the program was coming from their

pocket and that they did not deserve to obtain help in any way. They believed that staff needed to work harder on developing a more strategic approach to understand them.

Participants reported that they lacked support from the staff, society, laws, and the public as a whole. They reported that society acts like being homeless is a crime. They reported that they could be arrested for being homeless and charged with trespassing, and they were taking action to prevent being arrested by being cognizant of where they slept when living on the streets. They reported staff profiling them by calling them names and humiliating them. They reported that the negative discrimination and lack of support is affecting them physically and psychologically in life and made them feel very vulnerable and reduced from normal to tainted and discounted individuals. This made them feel like nobody cares about them in any way, and their feelings were disregarded. They wanted staff to recognize their potential vulnerability and individual needs. They reported they wanted to be treated as humans and given clear explanations of their requirements promptly, fairly, and supportively.

Participants reported that networking with others and having supportive staff are very crucial and beneficial to them. They believed that through support and networking, they would be able to support others who are in the same situation. They would also be able to find resources, get help, and give help to others in crisis, and, hence, lead a productive and healthy life. They believed that they would be empowered by the support from staff, build trust, stand up and take responsibility for their actions, then work toward solving their issues. Participants believed that a transitional program would work better if

the staff were retrained. By retraining the staff, staff would be able to conduct themselves in a better way, respect the needs of residents, and treat residents as humans.

Finally, providing resources that are current can guide them in searching for permanent housing and jobs.

Interpretation of the Findings

The intent of this study was to understand the experiences of young homeless adults ages 18 to 24 who are using a transitional housing facility. A total of six themes were found: (a) length of stay/moving around, (b) rules/fear for personal safety, (c) abusive staff/staff prejudice, (d) lack of support, (e) networking with others/supportive staff, and (f) providing resources. Every research question was associated with two themes, which emerged from the semistructured interviews. Findings were in accordance with the identification of themes from interviews with the participants. These themes are discussed in relationship to conceptual framework and the review of literature.

Findings Related to the Conceptual Framework

Ecological theory was used to explore the experiences of young homeless adults aged 18 to 24 who are using transitional housing. Ecological theory is a general metatheory that provides for many individuals, especially with this homeless population, and highlights that individuals who are experiencing homelessness have various supports and challenges from various influences from their environment (see Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Further, these influences are often interrelated. This makes it important for a thorough assessment of individuals' social supports to be completed in order to explore the multidimensional nature of support. For example, caseworkers must consider how the

rules and structure of transitional programs may foster or undermine social support, stigma, and discrimination that young homeless adults may face and which may likely affect their use of transitional facilities.

According to ecological theory, behaviors are understood by systemically examining the stressors and supports present in a person's context (Bronfenbrenner, 1979a). The participants expressed their ecology by providing information about their experiences and challenges in using transitional housing. Based on the findings, significant barriers to using transitional housing included (a) length of stay and moving around, (b) rules and fear for personal safety, (c) abusive staff and staff prejudice, (d) lack of support, (e) networking with others, and supportive staff, and (f) providing resources.

Participants also voiced that time constraints imposed on them by housing program policies were too limited and limiting. Participants expressed concerns that they did not have sufficient time to find jobs because of difficulties getting around in the city to search and interview for jobs and to find a job in the time frame given to them. Access to resources and referral to resources that could have helped them were reported as being limited and/or nonexistent. Participants reported a limited number of beds available and that policies, rules, and requirements necessary to live in transitional housing facilities are rigid and intrusive.

Additional information provided by participants showed that individuals with criminal records had to wait for 5 years before they could be considered for transitional housing. The waiting period for permanent housing used to be at least 2 years prior to

being considered. The list had extended to 7 years, possibly more. Previous research conducted by Ogden and Avades (2011) indicated that individuals who are homeless seeking housing are most often turned away due to rigid housing policies. More awareness must be provided for accessibility of resources to encourage more young homeless adults in utilizing transitional facilities.

Comparison of Data to Literature Review

Theme 1: Length of stay and moving around. I asked participants about how long they were in transitional housing, and all participants reported that their time has been short, and they are always on the move. The participants reported that they would have stayed, but the transitional program was being pushy and too regimented. Participants reported that being in transitional housing seemed as if they were in jail as they tend to lack personal freedom. Mackelprang et al. (2015) reported that the homeless population is a highly transient population of people, and tracking them is difficult and expensive. According to Brenner and DeLamater (2016), the transient nature of this population is to avoid being a burden to families and friends, and this could result in flaws in their memory and losing contact with their case managers prior to being housed. Ausikaitis (2014) confirmed that this population intentionally avoids all forms of contact, which in turn prevents them from getting into trouble with the authorities.

Theme 2: Rules/fear for personal safety. All participants believe rules are poorly defined, and some peers seemed to have hierarchical relationships with staff, which results in staff being biased and their feelings being disregarded (see Mayberry et al., 2014). They also reported safety as being a major issue in transitional facilities.

Benston (2015) stated that young homeless adults would have to refrain from bringing different people to their apartment for their own safety. Participants in this situation verbalized their vulnerabilities while using transitional facilities. They reported the urge to walk out of the facilities sometimes, but they had no other place to go. They reported that their belongings were being stolen, and they were exposed to different illnesses on a regular basis. Mackelprang (2015) and Velez et al. (2017) reported that individuals who are homeless are likely to have multiple medical problems, which are more progressive and chronic. In addition, their physical health is compromised due to the psycho-social stressors, as they continue to struggle to survive, maintain safety, and find food and shelter.

Bronfenbrenner (1994) asserted that individuals tend to encounter stressors on multiple levels of the environment. Ecological theory allows individuals to gain better understanding of how their roles and rules may change as they enter a new environment. Fotheringham, Walsh, and Burrowes, (2013) identified poor handoff and breakdown in care to have been linked to adverse events. Participants tend to feel less satisfied with care and hospitalization. Program restrictions, regulations, and policies on eligibility constrained as well as uncertainty associated with individual being considered for permanent housing also played extensive part in jeopardizing safety of the participants in transitional facilities. Participants reported being forced to share living spaces. Mayberry et al. (2014) alerted that refusing to share rooms with others may result in them losing privileges. They identified aspects of structure, physical space, appliances, and designs as problematic. Fotheringham, et al. (2013) confirmed that safety could be managed by

individuals remaining proactive, being flexible in addressing multiple issues and staff providing services that meet the needs of each individual in the transitional facilities.

Theme 3: Abusive staff/staff prejudice. Participants reported that staff made things harder for them to want to remain at the transitional facilities. They reported being emotionally and verbally abused by the staff at the transitional housing facilities. According to Fisher et al. (2014) and Giritli-Nygren and Schmauch (2013), poor communication, cultural differences, incomplete transfer of information, and inadequate education of staff, limited access to essential services and absence of a single point person to ensure continuity of care were contributing factors to safety concerns when utilizing transitional facilities. Almutairi (2015) also reported communication barriers and demonstration of low cultural competency as contributing factors to limiting access to essential services amongst this population, which also is a major safety concerns among homeless population. In addition, de Veer et al. (2018) and Klop et al. (2018) stated that staff need to be specifically trained in this field to be able to provide necessary care and services to individuals who are using transitional housing services.

Theme 4: Lack of support. Most participants complained about the support they lacked from staff, the society, the laws, and the public as a whole. Participants 2, 3, 7, 10, 12, and 13, reported that the negative discrimination and lack of support was affecting them physically and psychologically in life and made them feel very vulnerable and reduced from normal to tainted and discounted individuals. Support was determined to have been the key aspects in transitional housing, as this assist individuals in exiting homelessness successfully and sustainably (Giritli-Nygren & Schmauch, 2013).

According to Henwood, Stanhope, and Padgett (2011), individuals who are homeless are likely to be oppressed by housing staff in attempt to mold their behaviors. Wasserman and Clair (2011) speculate that individuals who are homeless are treated as truant children, since they are morally and physically weak, thus making the housing staff to attempt to empower them and control their destinies. Despite the fact that transitional housing provides a stable environment and produce lasting relationships among individuals who are homeless (Byrne, Fargo, Montgomery, Munley, & Culhane, 2014), participants reported that they have difficulties seeking support from some staff at the facilities. Participant reported that lack of support from staff prevented them from being able to address both their external and internal barrier while in transitional facilities. Research revealed that most people are afraid of individuals who are homeless, but after spending time with them, the fear is lessened. Additionally, individuals who are homeless often experience isolation and no one really cares to listen to them (Herring, 2014).

Theme 5: Networking with others/supportive staff. All the participants reported that networking was crucial and very beneficial to every homeless person. Participants described networking to have been vital. According to Linton and Shafer (2014), homeless persons have no family or finances, thus suffering in a lonely and solitary environment, therefore giving them the most needed support will make a difference in their lives. They believe that loss of connection could be very detrimental as they felt as if they were cut off from the community. According to Giritli-Nygren and Schmauch, (2013), loss of connection could lead to isolative behaviors. HUD (2015) also indicated that individuals who are homeless suffer from severe disadvantage in society

and often do not know where to begin in recovery unless adequate support is given to them. Having a 24-hour access to resources gave them a sense of belonging, safety, support, and acceptance (Giritli-Nygren & Schmauch, 2013). A good networking helped with the improvement and stability, as well as reduce preventive health issues (Collins et al., 2018). Tsai and Rosenheck (2013) identified food, shelter, and clothing, are extremely important and beneficial to individuals who are homeless. Most of the of the support comes from variety of services in which a significant number of homeless may not participate due to lack of knowledge. Housing vouchers are also eligible for this population. Individuals who are homeless have been known to have been providing each other various types of support, ranging from friendship, food, relational care, and other forms of assistance (Tsai & Rosenheck 2013). Resources such as skill development and work opportunities are primary support geared toward individuals who are homeless (Tsai & Rosenheck 2013). In the United States, department of labor is assisting in addressing the issue of meaningful and sustainable employment among this population, through targeted programs. By so doing, individuals who are homeless will develop sustainable lifestyles (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness [USICH], 2013). Through this, homeless is addressed in federal level and are connected to resources at the state level (Clifford & Piston, 2017).

Theme 6: Providing resources. The participants responses in regard to resources were very consistent depending on their circumstances. Swick and Bailey (2004) and Yu et al. (2012) described the importance of sharing resources to enhance services for individuals who are homeless. According to Holtschneider (2016), providing individuals

who are homeless with adequate resources will help them more quickly to reconnect to permanent housing, thus making their transition more successful. In addition, individuals should be taught the necessary skills for successful reintegration and economic self-sufficiency such as vocational skills and budgeting, etc., by so doing, homeless individuals would be empowered to take control of their lives and situation (Abramovich & Shelton, (Eds.). 2017 & Kuehn, 2016). Also, homeless individual having adequate resources will allow for positive navigation and break few barriers they may face which might have led to prolonged episodes of homelessness (HUD, 2015).

Limitations of the Study

There were, as with any research study, some limitations to this study. Data was collected from a small sample of participants who were willing and able to share personal information about their experiences in utilizing transitional facilities as individuals undergoing homelessness. Some participants were ready to share their experiences in great length, whereas others were not as forthcoming. Participants used self-reported subjective data that could not be verified. Self-report may be inaccurate due to flaws in memory caused by transience, blocking, misattribution, absent-mindedness, suggestibility, persistence, and bias (Yu, 2016). Data obtained was solely based on interviews and observations during the interviews. Other individuals who did not take part in this study might have different opinions.

Additionally, participants were interviewed only once; thus, leaving qualitative data to be less saturated (Sharir, 2017). Thirdly, the participants were all recruited from the same faith based transitional facility, which could contribute to a possible clustering

effect. Finally, the results of this study cannot be generalized to the entire populations of persons who are homeless due their transience nature and the small size. While the assumptions were that participants will honestly and openly share their experiences utilizing transitional housing facilities as it relates to homelessness and the reasons why they are hesitant to use transitional facilities, some participants may have excluded vital details of their experiences due to trust issues.

To control for issues of investigator bias, my personal prejudices, beliefs, and perspectives were examined using Epoche (Greek word) “suspension” allows judgment to be suspended regarding the general belief in the existence of the external world in sorting out the participants’ answers (Hedin et al., 2012). The use of ordinary way to view the experience needs to be ignored. Moustakas suggested that in epoche phase of deriving knowledge from the interview, the investigator needs to abstain from making judgements and avoid common ways of perceiving the comments from the participants (Moustakas, 1994).

Recommendations

The results of this study shaded light on the need for research in several important areas. First, while the study focused on young homeless adults ages 18 to 24 who are utilizing transitional facilities. Future research should explore young homeless adults’ process of reintegrating with support after entering permanent housing and explore remaining support needs after leaving transitional housing facilities. Also, future research should look at the experiences of former residents in informing best practices with homeless young adults and also explore the impact of social support groups for

young adults on program satisfaction. Future research could benefit from using a community based participatory research approach to explore and assess adaptations to a transitional housing facility using the expert experiences of homeless young adults. Therefore, this study suggests that, homelessness should be defined as an ecological problem rather than individual problem. In addition, environmental stressors should be address when homeless is involved, to make intervention effective. For this purpose, transitional housing should be the first choice.

Implications for Positive Social Change

The implication for social change is that this study provides a better understanding of the problem, which may lead to improved outreach, more effective programs, better training of staff, ultimately reducing long term homelessness in our society. Young homeless adults could successfully be assisted by service providers from moving from transitional housing to longer-term housing options. Young homeless adults who are now in transitional housing could be allowed to stay on the housing register, while professional staff review their circumstances regularly to ensure the right type of assistance is provided for the duration of their stay.

This study could contribute to positive social change by allowing housing providers to work with young homeless adults to identify exit pathways from transitional housing. Young homeless adults could be provided with intensive case management to assist them transition into permanent housing. This study could contribute to a positive social change by allowing young homeless adults to be assisted in developing a support

system, which could strengthen and stabilize their lives. Young homeless adults could then begin to advocate for changes that could break their cycle of homelessness.

Knowing that transitional housing provides a holistic approach in meeting an individual's needs, investment in education and training to improve long-term life chances could be assessed. This study could also contribute to positive social change by allowing a supportive and nurturing environment to be provided, where young homeless adults could learn how to adjust back to life in the real world.

Conclusion

Homelessness in the United States is a growing and most misunderstood problem. Homelessness transcends culturally, racially, geographically, gender wise, and age wise boundaries. It presents social and financial burdens to the society. Homelessness has proven to be persistent, despite policy makers, advocates, and activists stepping in to address the growing problem (NCH, 2012). While there is research on barriers to accessing resources, very little attention is given to the survival strategies of young adults who are homeless between ages 18 to 24.

In light of this research, the purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of young homeless adults aged 18 to 24 who are utilizing transitional housing. Data was collected from 15 participants, predominantly Caucasian. The phenomenological nature of this study provided a comprehensive understanding of participants' lived experiences and perspective in utilizing transitional housing. Participants related changes in their lives as a result of being homeless and utilizing transitional housing services to have helped in address the dangers of living on the streets. The primary challenges were fear for

personal safety and poorly defined rules and hierarchical relationships with staff. Other concerns centered on participants' living environments being threatened when they break the rules. Participants were overwhelmed by lack of support by staff, the society, the laws, and the public as a whole. They believe that having a good support will empower them and allow them to build trust, stand up for themselves, and take responsibility for their actions. Participants however, strongly believed networking to be crucial and very beneficial to every homeless person and current resources will help them sail through.

The study also demonstrated the importance of incorporating an ecological theory in addressing the issues faced by this population. Ecological theory has proven to be effective in understanding experiences of young homeless adults in utilizing transitional housing. Thinking ecologically, young homeless adults will gain a better understanding of how resources could be mobilized to overcome social barriers and increase opportunities for social inclusion (Aubry et al., 2013).

Thompson et al. (2015) postulates working with this population is very challenging due to lack of trust. In creating positive social change, working more effectively with young homeless adults in being open without judging them and understanding them in context could help them build trust and increase support system.

Transitional housing could be used as a significant intervention to address homelessness among this population. Every person deserves to be housed, young homeless adults will do better and recover more effectively if they are provided with housing. Young adults who gain an understanding of their own strengths and resilience may be empowered as seeing themselves in a more positive perspective (Ausikaitis,

(2014; Zolloskiv & Bullock, 2012). They may also be less likely engaging in dangerous or behaviors which may be harmful to them (Ungar, 2015).

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Appendix A: Letter of Cooperation From a Research Partner

Dear Cornelia Edoh,

Based on my review of your research proposal, I give permission for you to conduct the study entitled Experience of Young Homeless Adults who are Utilizing Transitional Housing as a Survival Strategy within the Phoenix Metropolitan Area. As part of this study, I authorize you to put the flyer in a newsletter to recruit participants from our facility. Individuals' participation will be voluntary and at their own discretion. We reserve the right to withdraw from the study at any time if our circumstances change.

I understand that the student will not be naming our organization in the doctoral project report that is published in ProQuest.

I confirm that I am authorized to approve research in this setting and that this plan complies with the organization's policies.

I understand that the data collected will remain entirely confidential and may not be provided to anyone outside of the student's supervising faculty/staff without permission from the Walden University IRB.

Sincerely,

Appendix B: Recruitment Flyer

PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY ON YOUR EXPERIENCES AS A
HOMELESS YOUNG ADULT USING TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

I am looking for volunteers to be interviewed in a study for my doctoral research about young adults who are experiencing homelessness and are using transitional housing as a survival strategy. This study is independent of any organizational activities and not related to services being provided.

- You must be 18 to 24 years of age
- You must not be involved with alcohol abuse or using illegal substances.
- You must be homeless, living in transitional housing.
- As a participant in this study, you will be asked questions concerning your personal life and your experiences being homeless and homeless services. This interview will take about 60 minutes and it will be audio recorded.

Cornelia Edoh, Doctoral Student at Walden University

If you are interested, please contact me directly using my information below

XXX and/or email address XXX@waldenu.edu.

Appendix C: Demographic Questionnaire

1. How old are you? _____
2. What is your educational level? _____
3. Are you experiencing homelessness? Do you have income? Yes _____ No _____
4. How long have you been homeless? _____
5. Do you currently sleep in an emergency shelter? Yes _____ No _____
6. Have you applied for transitional housing? Yes _____ No _____
7. How many times have you applied for transitional housing program? _____
8. Do you currently live in a transitional housing program? Yes _____ No _____
9. Would you be willing to share your experiences in an interview about transitional housing and related services? Yes _____ No _____
10. Are you currently involved with substance abuse? Yes _____ No _____

Appendix D: Interview Questions

RQ1: How do homeless young adults describe their experiences in utilizing transitional housing?

1. How long have you been in transitional housing? How many times have you been in a transitional housing setting?
2. How did you learn about transitional housing?
3. Describe how the information assisted you in entering transitional housing.

SQ1: How do young homeless adults describe experiences in support programs required for placement in housing?

4. Describe what has been your experience in transitional support housing
5. Please describe your experience with support staff in transitional support housing.
6. Describe the problems or challenges you have experienced in working with the staff at the transitional support housing facility.

SQ 2: How do homeless young adults describe a successful transitional housing experience?

7. What services or experiences help to support you in transitional housing?

How would you describe a successful transitional housing experience?

8. Based on your experiences, what is the most serious concern or issues you are facing living in transitional housing?

These are all the questions I have for you today. Is there is anything you would like to add about your experiences in transitional housing?

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of young adults aged 18 to 24 who are homeless and are living in transitional housing. One to one semi structured interview will be used to examine and gain a better understanding of the experience faced by young homeless adults in accessing transitional housing. The approval of the Institutional Research Board (IRB) at Walden will be obtained to conduct my study. Following IRB approval, the director at the shelter program will be contacted.

A letter of corporation will be obtained from the director of the program to post a flyer in the church newsletter in the Phoenix metropolitan area, to announce the study and the criteria. Interested individuals will be asked to contact me directly using the contact information provided in the recruitment flyer. Participants will be screened during this time.

When eligibility is determined, an appointment will be made to meet at a mutually agreeable time in a private room at local library for the interview. A consent form will be reviewed prior to the commencement of the interview and all questions will be answered accordingly. Potential participants will be asked to sign two copies of the consent from. One copy will be retained by the researcher, while the second copy will be given to the participant. During the semi structured interviews, I will be sensitive and flexible in my questioning to allow participants to answer questions openly to where an in-depth source of information will be obtained. I will be objective during the interviews.

Participants will be asked the same set of questions and they will be encouraged to provide any additional comments and clarification, which may result in in-depth information on the topic. Interviews are expected to last for 60 minutes and will be audio recorded with field notes taken for each session. A separate audio tape will be used for each participant.

At the end of the interview, participants will be asked if they have additional information. Incentives will not be given to the potential participants, but potential participants will be thanked for their time. Any information that will identify the participants will be removed before giving the tapes to the professional transcriptionist. The transcribed interviews will be stored on a password-protected USB drive. I will review the transcripts with the audio-recordings and make corrections necessary to the transcript. I will analyze the data using Moustakas' (1994) phenomenological steps for the data analysis.

Participants' identity will be protected by using pseudonyms in the final report. Data will be stored in locked file cabinet for five years in my home, then it will be destroyed by deleting and shredding the information.

Appendix F: Confidentiality Agreement

Name of Signer:

During the course of my activity in collecting data for this research:
Transcriptionist will have access to information, which is confidential and should not be disclosed. I acknowledge that the information must remain confidential, and that improper disclosure of confidential information can be damaging to the participant.

By signing this Confidentiality Agreement I acknowledge and agree that:

1. I will not disclose or discuss any confidential information with others, including friends or family.
2. I will not in any way divulge, copy, release, sell, loan, alter or destroy any confidential information except as properly authorized.
3. I will not discuss confidential information where others can overhear the conversation. I understand that it is not acceptable to discuss confidential information even if the participant's name is not used.
4. I will not make any unauthorized transmissions, inquiries, modification or purging of confidential information.
5. I agree that my obligations under this agreement will continue after termination of the job that I will perform.
6. I understand that violation of this agreement will have legal implications.
7. I will only access or use systems or devices I am officially authorized to access, and I will not demonstrate the operation or function of systems or devices to unauthorized individuals.

Signing this document, I acknowledge that I have read the agreement and I agree to comply with all the terms and conditions stated above.

Signature:**Date:**