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Transient Zip Codes: Utilizing Counternarratives to Examine the Compounded Effects of Structural Racism and Housing Insecurity

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ABSTRACT

This research highlights implications for high school students experiencing housing instability who travel multiple locales to remain engaged in school. Authors utilize structural racism and counternarratives to understand the experiences of two Black youth as they navigate housing insecurity while pursuing high school diplomas. The counternarratives elevate three significant themes. First, structural inequities that Black youth experiencing homelessness encounter while pursuing education cannot be decontextualized from the racialized spaces they are required to navigate. Second, Black youth experiencing homelessness value their education and are willing to cross zip codes to obtain housing and a quality education. Last, the educational pursuits of youth experiencing homelessness in historically Black, disinvested communities are compounded by their community's cumulative disadvantage. This research approach allows for the development of robust analysis of the salience of race in the lives of youth and families experiencing housing instability, and counters deficit narratives that further disenfranchise and limit outcomes.

Keywords: homeless education policy, counternarratives, structural racism, youth agency, student homelessness, urban education

Housing instability and mobility negatively impact the educational trajectories and outcomes of students experiencing homelessness (Hallett & Skrla, 2016; Tobin,

2016). While much emphasis has been placed on student experiences and outcomes in school, less attention has been devoted to examining spaces and/or geographical locations students traverse as they move between various residences and their primary school placement. Understanding the locations that youth navigate is particularly important in large urban spaces where services and resources vary greatly. This paper highlights the spaces that youth experiencing homelessness negotiate to maintain educational access and consistency. In many large urban spaces, past housing segregation practices (e.g., redlining, blockbusting) continue to impact housing access. Black communities who were subjected to redlining are particularly vulnerable to discriminatory housing practices and community disinvestment today, thereby limiting the ability to secure housing (Rothstein, 2017). Many Black residents in historically redlined communities continue to experience exclusion, discrimination, and blocked opportunity.

Lack of access to consistent, stable housing threatens the health, well-being, and educational outcomes of families and students experiencing homelessness (Aviles & Heybach, 2017; Desmond et al., 2013). Equally important are out-of-school factors (Milner, 2012) shaping student engagement as they venture to reach the schoolhouse door. This research highlights the implications associated with high school aged students experiencing housing instability traveling multiple locales to remain engaged in school and access necessary services. Authors utilize structural racism and counternarratives as frameworks for understanding the experiences of two Black youth, John, and Shantel (pseudonyms to protect the identity of participants), as they navigate housing insecurity while pursuing their high school diplomas. John's educational journey requires navigating the city of Chicago, and Shantel's housing instability and educational journey takes place throughout Los Angeles County. In both cases, youth are required to traverse various neighborhoods and rely on familiar networks for access to housing and schooling.

FRAMEWORKS

Structural racism is a framework utilized to understand how public policies, institutions, and economic markets interact across geographical space and time to negatively impact the quality of life for Black and other racially marginalized populations (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Noguera & Alicea, 2021). The framework moves beyond interpersonal interactions of racial discrimination to examine formal and informal practices and policies that perpetuate inequity. As such, structural racism "calls for a deeper more nuanced examination of broader societal, systemic factors that reach beyond individual assets, deficits and behavior" (Fulbright-Anderson et al., 2005, p. 13). This manuscript uses structural racism to contextualize the racialized spaces that Black youth are required to navigate in low-income, disinvested neighborhoods and communities. Moreover, it employs counternarratives to examine the agency and assets that students experiencing housing instability possess and analyzes their experiences from a strength-based rather than a deficit-based understanding.

Counternarratives are an analytical tenet of critical race theory dating back to the work of legal scholar Derrick Bell (1992). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) define

counternarratives in education research as "telling the stories of those people whose experiences are often untold" (p. 32). Counternarratives break away from the dominant accounts of marginalized communities, which often portray them dismally and allow for the marginalized to voice their own reality (Harper & Davis, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1998; Milner & Howard, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Dominant narratives assert that Black communities in the United States disassociate from educational obtainments (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986) and over-emphasize research inquiries focused on students not graduating high school (Tobin, 2016). As an analytical tool, counternarratives shed light on individual agency and its associated outcomes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Housing, Education, and Race

In the United States (U.S.), governmental housing policy was developed to create and sustain a system of racial segregation (Rothstein, 2015). Racially explicit state-sponsored policies dictated where Black and White populations were able to live, segregating most every metropolitan area in the U.S. (Rothstein, 2017). Despite the passage of the Fair Housing Act of 1968, Black and Latina/o/x homeowners continue to face discrimination, with both populations considerably impacted by the recent housing and foreclosure crisis (Williams, 2015). Federal policy continues to significantly influence residential patterns of housing unstable and/or highly mobile families (Miller & Bourgeois, 2013). Communities in which high rates of housing instability exist are commonly characterized by less affordable housing and increased economic distress, serving as barriers to securing stable housing in the future (Alexander-Eitzman et al., 2013). Further, such distressed neighborhoods are reflective of high rates of poverty, female-headed households with young children, and higher proportions of Black residents (Shin, 2021).

On average, local property taxes and local funding sources, such as parcel taxes and donations, make up 45% of school district funding (Hahnel et al., 2020). The localized funding structure for public schools means that access to middle-class and affluent neighborhoods are directly connected to school resources. Though the 1954 Brown v. Board of Education ruling ended legal racial segregation in public schools, de facto segregation persisted through neighborhood segregation and exclusion (Bischoff, 2008; Orfield & Eaton, 1996). Rather than improving public schools in disinvested communities, Black and other marginalized populations were often forced to bus their children to schools out of their local neighborhoods to White, affluent communities (Woodward, 2011). School busing programs in the 1970s became mandated by the courts (Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenbury Board of Education, 1971) as a temporary solution to expedite racial integration. Busing programs were rarely coupled with an investment in public schools in predominantly Black communities (Woodward, 2011). Thus, when mandated busing programs ended in the 1990s, the same disinvested Black communities remained under-resourced and racially segregated (Frankenberg et al., 2019). Many individuals living in historically marginalized communities are still required to leave their

neighborhoods to attend better-resourced schools. Furthermore, schools and school districts remain gatekeepers for racially marginalized and low-income children and youth. Often parents in historically disinvested communities are forced to falsify their housing residency so their children gain access to an adequately resourced public school—an infraction that could lead to a fine or incarceration in some states (Harris, 2017).

Students experiencing homelessness demonstrate high rates of mobility with almost 40% living in a new zip code and approximately 30% attending school in a new district in any given academic year (Cowen, 2017). Black and Latina/o/x students are more likely to experience homelessness (Aviles de Bradley, 2015), a reflection of the racial/ethnic disparities and hierarchies that exist in the U.S. For example, Black people comprise 13% of the general population in the U.S., 26% of those living in poverty, and account for more than 40% of the homeless population, suggesting that poverty rates alone do not explain the over-representation (Olivet et al., 2018, p. 6). Latina/o/x populations comprise 18% of the U.S. population, 17.6% of those living in poverty, and 22% of the homeless population (National Alliance to End Homelessness [NAEH], 2020). NAEH (2020) recognizes "…homelessness is a by-product of systemic inequity: the lingering effects of racism continue to perpetuate disparities in critical areas that impact rates of homelessness" (para 2). As such, particular attention should be paid to how race shapes opportunities and access to housing, employment, and education among students and families of color experiencing homelessness.

The mobility families endure frequently means their children are subject to not only residential instability but school instability as well. Home and school instability often lead to challenges with student attendance, school completion, and discipline (Murphy, 2011). Housing instability impacts the physical, psychological, and educational needs of students (Murphy, 2011; Rafferty, 1999). Unstably housed students score lower than their stably housed peers on achievement tests and are less likely to be promoted (Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, 2017). Moreover, housing instability results in frequent school absences and transfers (Hallett & Skrla, 2016; Miller & Bourgeois, 2013), with students often worrying about their home situation and feeling socially isolated from peers (Murphy, 2011).

McKinney-Vento: Homeless Education Policy

When children and youth experience housing instability, they frequently have difficulty in maintaining their student roles (Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, 2017). According to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 Subtitle VII-B (henceforth McKinney-Vento), children and youth experiencing housing instability are required to receive equal access to a free and appropriate public education. McKinney-Vento defines housing instability as the absence of a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987). Those experiencing housing instability include children and youth who: (1) share the housing of other persons (i.e., doubled up) due to loss of family housing and economic hardship; (2) live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, and camping grounds; and (3) reside in emergency and transitional shelters,

are abandoned in hospitals, or stay in public/private spaces not typically used as housing for humans, such as cars, parks, abandoned buildings, and train stations (Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015).

McKinney-Vento outlines federal directives to providing support and eliminating barriers for unstably housed students. This includes ensuring that state and local agencies provide unstably housed families and unaccompanied youth with equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youths; review and undertake steps to revise residency requirements, laws, regulations, practices, or policies interfering with education as provided to other children and youths; not separate students due to their housing status; and provide access to education and other services that allow unstably housed students opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards to which all students are held (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987).

METHODS/CASES

Authors present two cases demonstrating the myriad of locales that youth experiencing housing instability must travel to meet both their basic needs and educational responsibilities. Both cases are drawn from larger research studies in Chicago and Los Angeles. Historically, both cities contained strong housing restrictions prohibiting Black Americans from accessing housing. Specifically, in 1940, it was found that "80% of Chicago and Los Angeles had restrictive covenants that excluded African American families" from access to housing (Williams, 2015, p. 259). The Chicago-based study was an IRB approved qualitative research project conducted during the 2007-2008 school year in which the first author spent one full academic year in two Chicago public high schools interviewing a total of six Black youth, three homeless liaisons, and one legal advocate. Document analysis and field observations were also conducted.

The Los Angeles County based study was an IRB-approved qualitative research project conducted between the 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 school years. The larger study analyzed Los Angeles County and two local school districts' approaches to addressing the academic success of students experiencing homelessness. The second author spent three years interviewing a total of twenty-three youth, two school principals, ten teachers and counselors, nine city and government administrators, five homeless service providers, five school district and county homeless liaisons, and ten staff members of community-based organizations in Los Angeles County. Field observations and document analysis were also undertaken for this study.

Chicago Context

Chicago remains the third largest city in the U.S. with a population of approximately 2.7 million. Black/African-American and Hispanic/Latina/o/x households disproportionately experience poverty and homelessness, with an estimated 34,125 Black/African-American Chicagoans having experienced homelessness. Further, an estimated 14,491 Latina/o/x Chicagoans experienced homelessness. In total, 81.1% (33,525) of people who were temporarily staying with

others throughout 2019 identified as Black/African-American and/or Hispanic/Latiné* (Mendieta & Carlson, 2021).

By the 1920s, Chicago consisted of at least seventy-five communities; each community centered around the social and cultural demographics of various racial/ethnic populations. This resulted in a diverse but largely segregated city. The housing practice of restrictive racial covenants limited Black residents to the South Side of Chicago, preventing them from moving, simultaneously solidifying their racial/ethnic isolation (Chicago History Museum, n.d.a).

Despite the local and federally mandated housing practices that alienated Black populations from acquiring housing, Black Chicagoans resisted. As early as the 1940s, Black Chicagoans called for " 'the dismissal of the National Housing Agency's, John Blandford, for his' deference to the principle of residential segregation' " (Hirsch, 1998, p. 12). As restrictive racial covenants became illegal, Black residents were eventually able to move into other areas of the city (Chicago History Museum, n.d.b). Despite the increased access to housing in other parts of the city, segregated housing continued to plague Chicago. Resource rich neighborhoods and communities are primarily found on the North Side of the city, while many parts of the South and West Sides continue to be neglected, disinvested and/or gentrified (Moore, 2019).

To illustrate the disparities that exist among the various racial/ethnic communities of Chicago, we now turn to the story of John. John is a 16-year-old African American male attending a Chicago public high school on the North Side. John's housing situation is complex—he oscillates between three, sometimes four households: one residence on the North Side near his high school, another located on the West Side with his mother/uncle, and yet two others on the South Side with his father and/or cousin. John has four siblings, and often takes on the responsibility to care for his younger siblings, which directly affects his school attendance and work.

John began his high school career at a school located on the West Side of Chicago. According to John, the violence and gangs prevalent in this community prompted his parents to identify a school that was considered "safe" and could provide him with better educational opportunities. As a result, John began attending Diversey High. He expresses that attending school on the North Side has been a significant and welcomed change.

> Before I came to this school [Diversey High] I was at another school for freshman year…I got into too many fights in that school and that's why my momma put me in that [Diversey] school…I moved up there [North Side] with my godparents.

While John has been able to secure school stability, his housing situation remains tenuous. At times, John stays with his godparents (North Side), whose home is located within walking distance from Diversey High. Other times he must travel approximately two-hours (each way) on public transportation to reach the residence of his uncle (West Side), cousin (South Side) or father (South Side). John's mother is temporarily staying with his uncle until she can secure her own housing. Despite these challenges, John explains,

> …the twins and my sister stay out south with my dad…I live out west with my mom and my uncle…she [mom] gonna find her a job and all that so we can get us a house and all that, but we homeless, but not homeless where we just living with family until we can uh, til she get back on her feet…

Vacillating between various residences and school requires careful planning on the part of John and his family in order to ensure he remains in school. When John stays at his godparents residence near school he described the following,

> I'll probably wake up like around 6 [am], so I can just take me a shower, eat a bowl of cereal or something and leave out the house around 7 [am]…up north I ain't gotta worry about running around…

Conversely, when John stays on the West or South Sides, his commute time is much longer–approximately two hours each way–often causing him to be late or miss school altogether. John takes three trains and then walks a few blocks to arrive at his school or residential location. During one interview, John shares that his counselor showed him his attendance, reflective of missing 56% of school attendance days in the last month and a half. His attendance is much improved as the school year progresses, as John stays at his godparents on the North Side more frequently. As the oldest sibling, John's relationship with his family is also one of support and care; this not only means a longer commute time to/from school when he stays with his mom or dad, but he also shoulders more responsibility for the care of his siblings. John's determination to consistently attend school and be a "good" son and brother reflect his strength and agency, and that of his family.

LA Context

Like Chicago, Los Angeles County is another region in the United States significantly impacted by racist housing policies of the past. In the 1920s, housing options for Black Angelenos were limited by redlining and racial restrictive covenants (Rothstein, 2017). For example, neighborhoods in South Central Los Angeles, Boyle Heights, and Watts were redlined as "hazardous." In the 1950s, after Shelly v. Kraemer of 1948, racial restrictive covenants were no longer enforceable; however, neighborhoods in Los Angeles County where Black families integrated were immediately impacted by blockbusting. In the 1940s, predominately White, middle-class communities like Compton and Inglewood, California, became predominantly Black within a few decades. For example, in 1950, less than one percent of Compton's entire population was non-White; by 1960, forty percent of Compton residents were Black (Sides, 2004). While many Black homebuyers who moved to Compton were middle-class, the speculative housing market devalued their property and rapid White flight dramatically impacted the city's tax base. By the mid-1960s, redlined neighborhoods and cities affected by blockbusting became Black and Latinx areas that local governments and economic markets intentionally disinvested from and exploited. The limited tax base of the cities impacted their ability to fund and sustain public services such as schools and non-profit organizations. Today, many of the school districts in Los Angeles County impacted by racist housing policies of the past

currently serve the most students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, and students in special education programs (Noguera & Alicea, 2021). Black students are overrepresented in each subpopulation and often attend schools that do not meet their needs.

In the Los Angeles-based study, Black youth in LA County utilized their personal networks and piecemealed resources from several cities to obtain temporary housing and access to education. Such individual agency is illustrated via Shantel's journey to high school graduation. Like John, Shantel bounced around to receive the resources necessary for a safe place to sleep and access to school. However, as opposed to navigating different parts of the city, Shantel was required to traverse across different cities throughout the entire Los Angeles County. When interviewed, Shantel was 19 years old and had recently graduated high school. She grew up in South Central Los Angeles and faced housing insecurity after her mother kicked her out of the house at 14 years old. Shantel stayed with her father sporadically; however, their combative relationship led to her leaving and becoming an unaccompanied minor living on the streets. Shantel would travel to various cities at night in Los Angeles County to sleep in different parks or she would walk around to avoid sleeping. She recalled,

> [At] 15 and a half, I really started to experience homelessness. I was sleeping in parks. I slept at Independence Park [in Downey, CA]. And then after that, I was going to Los Angeles…Um, I can't remember the other parks I was sleeping at, it was a point where I didn't even sleep like that because I didn't trust the areas. I didn't trust the environments and stuff like that. Sometimes I would take a whole bus to Hollywood, get on the train, walk around and then do it all over again, like back and forth. Just for me not to sleep.

Shantel grew up in South Central Los Angeles, but attended a charter school ten minutes from her mother's house in Inglewood. Despite her housing instability, she stayed enrolled in school. In the interview, she shared, "My first goal was that I wanted my high school diploma. I want to feel like everything I'm going through right now, is not all bad… I'm smart. I know I got potential." To meet her goal, she would go to affluent areas to sleep or walk around at night and then take three buses in the morning to get to school. She was often late but prided herself in staying enrolled. While her charter school knew of her housing instability, they did not help her. After two years of seeking housing, Shantel was accepted into a temporary housing shelter for transitional aged youth. The shelter was two hours away from school in Long Beach, California. Despite the distance and her frequent tardiness, Shantel continued to attend her high school in Inglewood until her father contacted a former teacher of his in Compton and enrolled her in an alternative school there. Even though Shantel never lived in Compton, the school counselor at the alternative school and the Compton Unified School District homeless liaison worked together to help Shantel enroll and maintain a flexible class schedule to ensure that she could work and graduate. Ultimately, Shantel graduated high school and she currently resides in a homeless shelter. While she is still pursuing permanent housing, she is hopeful for her future. She stated:

> I got my high school diploma and like everything changed, everything changed. I was still homeless, but it wasn't as bad as sleeping in parks and stuff. So, I took that diploma, and I was like, okay, I'm gonna take this diploma and I'm really focused on something that I really want to do. I really want to become a poet.

DISCUSSION

Both counternarratives illustrate a solid commitment to school despite housing insecurity and homelessness. John and Shantel actively found ways to travel across zip codes to attend school and obtain their high school diploma. Both Shantel and John explicitly stated that pursuing their high school diploma was a great motivator. While truancy was an issue, getting to school ready to learn was a significant accomplishment.

John and Shantel's counternarratives elevate three significant themes. First, the structural inequities that Black youth experiencing homelessness encounter in their pursuit of school cannot be decontextualized from the racialized spaces they are required to navigate. Second, Black youth experiencing homelessness, and their respective families, value their education and are willing to cross zip codes to obtain both habitable, safe housing, and a quality education. Last, the educational pursuits of youth experiencing homelessness in historically Black, disinvested communities are compounded by their community's cumulative disadvantage.

Historically Disinvested Communities

Geographical location and space often determine the type and quality of resources, and opportunities available to students and families experiencing housing instability. While many may consider how a community impacts one's access to services and affordable housing, less attention has been given to the ways in which it may influence and shape educational engagement, access to quality education, and subsequent services for students experiencing housing instability. Our data indicate that youth and their families engage in zip code "hopping" to attend schools that are better resourced and funded. Moreover, students face the additional barrier of traveling to/from school and their disinvested communities, and other locations, to secure basic and ancillary service needs. In the case of John, the current lack of resources provided to him and his family on the West and South Sides of Chicago reflect the legacy of historically redlined communities. The high school John attends and the residence of his godparents are located on the North Side, an area historically deemed "still desirable" (HOLC, n.d.). In sharp contrast, the residences of John's father, cousin and mother/uncle are located in areas historically designated as "hazardous" (HOLC, n.d.). This continued segregation and disinvestment reflect findings by Mitchell and Franco (2018) that the economic and racial segregation created by redlining persist many decades later in several US cities today.

Previous research has explored the social context of communities and its role in understanding the spatial variations of people experiencing homelessness, finding that "homeless people may prefer or be forced to stay in neighborhoods that have

socioeconomically and demographically similar residents" (Shin, 2021, p. 5). For John and Shantel, this meant staying in communities where their familial and support networks could be readily accessed. Conversely, they left their local communities to seek out and obtain educational options and resources that would better meet their academic, material and safety needs; the lack of options and resources are reflective of the continued and pervasive discrimination that is both a function and outcome of racial economic inequity (Noel, Pinder, Stewart & Wright, 2019), and society's devaluing of Black communities (Perry, 2020). This finding informs service access and delivery. For example, this data can be used to inform the transportation needs and funding for students experiencing housing instability, and/or determining optimal community-school partnerships, including service locations in low-income or disinvested communities. Further, it also highlights the need to invest in and value the contributions and agency that Black and Brown communities have historically exhibited and continue to possess.

Youth and Family Agency

John and Shantel's narratives also push against deficit frames that Black families and students impacted by homelessness devalue educational attainment. Both John and Shantel attended the high school they perceived would best support their goal of graduating. They traveled hours to get to school because they believed obtaining a high school diploma could lead to a higher quality of life. Their narratives of resiliency align with other counternarratives of Black youth (Howard et al., 2019) and youth experiencing homelessness (Edwards, 2019) overcoming structural inequities and balancing competing priorities to graduate high school.

Furthermore, John and Shantel's narratives also show how familial networks are used to access school. For example, John's godparents leveraged their zip code privileges so John could break-through the geographical segregation in Chicago and attend a higher quality school that increased his chances of graduating. John's godparents committed to housing him and putting themselves at risk of a financial penalty or criminal penalty for "residency enrollment fraud." Their commitment aligns with literature of Black families breaking laws that prohibit their children from accessing a quality education (Harris, 2017). Family member's willingness to allow youth to use their residency for school demonstrates the sacrifices families make to break down educational barriers.

Moreover, McKinney-Vento recognizes variations in housing locations and its impact on school access. Under McKinney-Vento, students and their families have the choice of remaining in their "school of origin," the school they attended prior to their unstable housing situation, or enrolling in the school that is closest to their temporary or new housing location. School officials should be aware of McKinney-Vento provisions that allow for students and families experiencing homelessness to enroll in the school that best meets their educational needs. Awareness of the agency of families and youth coupled with understanding of the provisions outlined under McKinney-Vento will allow for a more nuanced approach to supporting the educational strengths and agency among youth and families facing housing instability.

Compounded Zip Code Insecurity

John and Shantel's narratives also align with literature on Black youth leaving their community to obtain an education (Fast, 2020). However, this study shows how this phenomenon is complicated and compounded by housing insecurity. Rather than toggling between their home community and school community, youth experiencing homelessness are often required to navigate three or more communities to meet their basic needs. John bounced between three different regions in Chicago to meet his family, housing, and educational needs. Shantel navigated five cities to meet her basic needs of safety, housing, and education. Both youth experiences provide examples of the compounding barriers of living in historically Black, disinvested communities. The cumulative disadvantage found in historically Black spaces creates unique barriers to the student homeless experience that individuals who experience homelessness in non-racialized Black spaces may not endure. Compounded zip code insecurity elevates the importance of analyzing the intersectional experience of youth impacted by homelessness in historically marginalized and disinvested communities with a structural racism lens.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The affordable housing shortage in the U.S. continues to limit access to stable, safe housing, especially amongst Black and Latina/o/x families and communities; an issue further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic (Blasi, 2020). School staff—teachers, counselors, liaisons—need to be aware of the ways in which a student's housing and racial status overlap, as it influences the type of support and resources needed for students to remain engaged in school. Housing status and racial status are intersectional; McKinney-Vento was created to ensure that students experiencing housing instability secure their right to a fair and equitable education, but often falls short in its ability to adequately address the racial dynamics at play in schools, communities, and society. Therefore, it is imperative that schools and communities interrogate—and ultimately eliminate—practices and policies that on the surface appear helpful or benign, however in actuality are shown to have negative and lasting impacts on students of color experiencing housing instability.

For example, school busing initiatives and donation-dependent programs within schools should be understood as temporary programmatic solutions to longstanding racial discrimination and policy failures that disproportionally impact lower-income, Black, and Latina/o/x students. Thus, a critical step towards remedying systemic issues is a more intentional and long-term investment in K-12 public schools in historically Black and Latina/o/x communities and schools.

To ensure stable access to housing and education for Black and Latina/o/x students experiencing homelessness, historically disinvested communities must be equipped with affordable housing and high-quality schools. Employing an equity-driven investment formula, such as weighted student funding, at the federal, state, and local level can provide historically disinvested school districts with more financial resources and flexibility to serve students experiencing homelessness. Weighted student funding (WSF) formulas allocate additional per-pupil funding based on the

number of students in various subpopulations (Roza et al., 2021). Developing research shows promising associations between weighted student funding formulas and increased academic outcomes for targeted subpopulations (Cruz et al., 2022). Several places have adopted a version of WSF, including the state of California and the city of Chicago; however, their effectiveness has been hampered in historically disinvested communities due to a lack of investment in other related factors (e.g. housing, healthcare). Specifically, WSF is most effective when combined with capital investment in updated school facilities, increased recruitment and retention programs or high-quality instruction, and rigorous curricula (Cruz et al., 2022; Lee & Fuller, 2022).

Further, equity-based funding formulas should include students experiencing homelessness as a weighted student subpopulation to ensure resources are funneled specifically to students experiencing homelessness. Currently, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is underfunded and reliant on external donations and charitable programs/organizations (Aviles de Bradley, 2015). Supplementary funding allocated explicitly for serving students experiencing homelessness could be used for housing assistance, legal services, and funding to cover a student's (and their family's) basic needs while facing housing instability.

In addition to improving the quality of schools in historically disinvested neighborhoods, our findings suggest a need for stronger collaboration between school districts, local municipalities, and local Black and Latina/o/x community-based organizations (CBO). School districts should encourage Latina/o/x and Black community-based organizations to co-locate on school property, establish data-sharing agreements to streamline services and service referrals, and leverage the school district as a partner for additional grant and funding opportunities that expand Black and Latina/o/x CBO resources. Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YDHP) and The Promise Neighborhoods, funded by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Education, encourage community-based partnerships that include schools (Morton, Edwards, & Kull, 2022). However, these federal programs do not explicitly seek out local, Black and Latina/o/x CBOs to support youth experiencing homelessness and reinvest resources into Black and Latina/o/x community-based organizations. Intentional investment in affordable housing, school infrastructure and staff, youth experiencing homelessness, and community-based organizations that support historically Black and Latina/o/x communities could start to mitigate structural barriers that force youth to leave their neighborhood to secure essential resources.

Employing frameworks such as structural racism are needed to develop a more robust analysis of the continued salience of race in the lives of youth and families experiencing housing instability. An explicit discussion of race and its influence on student (and family) access to quality education, and safe, stable housing should be undertaken, rather than the current color-blind approach to homeless education policy (Edwards, 2021). Further, analytical frameworks that center and privilege the lived experiences of those most impacted by issues of housing instability should be utilized. An approach centered and grounded in the experiences and perspectives of youth experiencing housing instability provides a necessary counter to the deficit narratives

that too often further disenfranchise and limit positive educational outcomes and housing stability for students and families experiencing homelessness.

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