

Homelessness and Housing Experiences among LGBTQ Young Adults in Seven U.S. Cities

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Abstract

Research demonstrates the challenges faced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQ) young adult(s) (YA) experiencing homelessness, including preliminary evidence regarding the unique barriers and circumstances of the subpopulations within the broader category of LGBTQ. Few research efforts have investigated the differential experiences between identity and racial subgroups within the population of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness, however. This study uses a seven-city sample of 442 LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness to examine the homelessness and housing experiences of LGBTQ YA—including specific experiences of marginalized and understudied subgroups—and compare these experiences across racial subgroups. Analyses revealed LGBTQ YA most commonly experienced homelessness because they were kicked out/asked to leave the home of their parents, relatives, foster or group homes. This experience was more common among transgender YA. Other differential experiences related to duration of homelessness, discrimination, and stress were reported across subgroups. This study fills a critical gap in the literature by identifying differential experiences of subgroups within the LGBTQ YA homeless population that can better inform program and policy interventions designed to prevent and end homelessness among YA.

Background and Purpose

LGBTQ YA are disproportionately represented in the population of youth experiencing homelessness in the United States (Choi et al., 2015; Durso and Gates, 2012; Lankenau, et al., 2005; Maccio and Ferguson, 2015; Quintana et al., 2010; Van Leeuwen et al., 2006). A recent report from Voices of Youth Count estimates that LGBTQ YA have a 120 percent increased risk of experiencing homelessness compared to cisgender and heterosexual YA (Morton et al., 2017). Likewise, youth of color, specifically Black youth, are at heightened risk of experiencing homelessness and are overrepresented both in the general population of youth experiencing homelessness (Morton, et al., 2017) and the population of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness (Choi et al., 2015; Maccio and Ferguson, 2016).

Structural barriers and systemic oppression affect the experiences of LGBTQ and youth of color experiencing homelessness. They frequently face barriers to housing and employment, as they are subjected to care rooted in heterosexism and cisgenderism, as well as widespread discrimination and misunderstanding from service providers and their service using peers (Abramovich, 2016; Shelton, 2015; Cochran et al., 2002; Gangamma et al., 2008; Gattis, 2013). *Heterosexism* refers to the systematic marginalization of lesbian, gay, and bisexual people and the structural favoring of heterosexual people and relationships (Ansara and Hegarty, 2012). *Cisgenderism* can be understood as the belief system that produces transphobia (Pyne, 2011). This prejudicial ideology delegitimizes the inherent knowledge people possess of their own genders and their own bodies (Ansara and Berger, 2016) and presumes that all people are cisgender. Black LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness must also contend with systemic racism and its subsequent effects, such as racial profiling, police and community harassment, and racial microaggressions (Gattis and Larson, 2017). Of concern, youth-serving systems (that is, housing, healthcare, education, employment)

often lack the ability to recognize and respond to the needs of YA whose lives are impacted by the multiple and layered stigmas resulting from racism, classism, heterosexism, cisgenderism, and transbias (Olivet and Dones, 2016).

Despite this growing literature concerning LGBTQ YA homelessness, a great deal of work remains. Much of the recent LGBTQ YA homelessness research examined the needs of the LGBTQ population as a broad group, often masking the variability of the experiences of the subgroups within. Studies have compared LGBTQ YA and non-LGBTQ YA or lesbian, gay, bisexual, and heterosexual YA (Cochran et al., 2002; Corliss, et al., 2011; Gangamma et al., 2008; Gattis, 2013; Walls, Hancock, and Wisneski, 2007). More recent work has begun to examine distinct subpopulations of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness, including transgender YA (Shelton and Bond, 2017; Shelton, 2015); Latino gay and bisexual male YA (Castellanos, 2016); and Black lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) YA (Gattis and Larson, 2017; Gattis and Larson, 2016). Still, few studies have adopted an intersectional lens toward understanding how multiple marginalized identities contribute to YA experiences of housing and homelessness.

This study contributes to the existing literature in several ways. First, it provides an up-to-date account of the homeless experiences of LGBTQ YA. Additionally, multicity data collection extends previous research situated in single cities or regions. Representing one of the largest samples of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness to date, this study enables an examination of specific subpopulations. Examining the characteristics of understudied subgroups within the population of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness provides an intersectional understanding of the ways in which race/ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation interact with the experience of homelessness—a critical step to informing policy and programmatic interventions aimed at addressing YA homelessness. This study uses a seven-city sample of 442 LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness to examine the homelessness and housing experiences of LGBTQ YA, as well as how these experiences differ among particularly marginalized and understudied subgroups experiencing homelessness (that is, bisexual and transgender identifying YA). The study also examines how experiences of homelessness compare across racial/ethnic subgroups within the LGBTQ, bisexual, and transgender YA samples.

Literature Review

A growing body of literature details the variabilities of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness. Research has demonstrated the disproportionate representation of LGBTQ YA in the population of YA experiencing homelessness, estimating that LGBTQ YA make up 20–40 percent of the overall homeless YA population (Choi et al., 2015; Durso and Gates, 2012; Lankenau et al., 2005; Maccio and Ferguson, 2015; Quintana et al., 2010; Van Leeuwen et al., 2006). LGBTQ YA experience homelessness at earlier ages (Moon et al., 2000) and remain homeless or unstably housed longer than their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts (Choi et al., 2015). One of the primary pathways into homelessness for all YA is family conflict (Cull, Platzer, and Balloch, 2006; Gaetz, 2014; Karabanow, 2004). A commonly cited reason for homelessness among LGBTQ YA is family conflict related to or exacerbated by sexual and/or gender identity (Shelton and Bond, 2017; Choi et al., 2015; Durso and Gates, 2012; Rew et al., 2005; Whitbeck et al., 2004). It is important,

however, to not overlook the social and economic conditions and structural factors that produce and maintain housing instability and homelessness (Shelton and Bond, 2017; Castellanos, 2016). To focus solely on family characteristics and individual risk ignores the systematic oppression and stigmatization at play in the lives of marginalized YA. Additional reasons for homelessness among LGBTQ YA noted in the literature include verbal abuse, parental substance use, aging out of child welfare systems, and a lack of affordable housing (Choi et al., 2015; Gangamma et al., 2008).

Evidence indicates that, once homeless, LGBTQ YA are at heightened risk for experiencing a range of negative physical, mental, and behavioral health outcomes. For example, compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts, LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness report higher rates of substance abuse, engagement in the sex industry, mental health symptoms, and victimization (Cochran et al., 2002; Corliss, et al., 2011; Gangamma et al., 2008; Gattis, 2013; Walls, Hancock, and Wisneski, 2007). The risks for LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness have been well documented. These studies provide a crucial understanding of the differential experiences of LGBTQ YA and non-LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness. The studies have informed best practice and policy recommendations for effectively serving LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness (Cray, Miller, and Durso, 2013; Ferguson and Maccio, 2012; Keuroghlian, Shtasel, and Bassuk, 2014; Page, 2017; Wilber, Ryan, and Marksamer, 2006).

Research to date has also increased governmental awareness of and investment in addressing homelessness among LGBTQ YA. For example, the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness Framework to End Youth Homelessness acknowledges LGBTQ youth as a subpopulation warranting attention given their disproportionate representation and unique needs (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2013). These research-informed policy and practice advances are critical for adequately addressing homelessness among YA.

Minimal research has detailed the within-group differences of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness, however. They are not a homogenous group. The needs and experiences of one subgroup within the homeless LGBTQ YA population do not necessarily reflect the needs and experiences of another subgroup. For example, cisgender YA with a minority sexual orientation may have vastly different experiences than transgender YA. Likewise, the experiences and resulting needs of LGBTQ YA of color are different from those of White LGBTQ YA. Although transgender people can also possess a minority sexual orientation, conflating their experiences with lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, and questioning (LGBQ) people ignores a salient dimension of their identity. Therefore, including transgender YA in research on sexual minorities rather than as a distinct category of inquiry renders their gender identity-related experiences invisible. Further, examining the experiences of LGBTQ YA without including a race/ethnicity-based analysis can mask the experiences of LGBTQ YA of color.

In a survey of homeless youth service providers, Choi et al. (2015) sought to identify similar and unique experiences of cisgender LGBQ YA and transgender YA experiencing homelessness. Several distinctions emerged. First, service providers were asked to compare the physical and mental health status of LGBQ, heterosexual, transgender, and cisgender YA they serve (response options included much worse, somewhat worse, about the same, somewhat better). Respondents reported that the physical health status of LGBQ YA experiencing homelessness was about the same

as heterosexual YA and that transgender YA were in worse physical health than their cisgender counterparts were. Similarly, providers reported that the mental health status of the LGBTQ YA they served was worse than the mental health status of their heterosexual and cisgender peers. Respondents were more likely to report worse mental health status for transgender YA.

While providers reported LGBTQ YA experienced longer durations of homelessness than their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts, they were more likely to report longer periods of homelessness for the transgender YA they serve. This finding is important, as longer durations of homelessness have been identified as a threat to resilience among YA experiencing homelessness (Cleverley and Kidd, 2011). Longer durations also are associated with higher levels of sexual risk behaviors, including engaging in sex while using substances and using contraceptives less consistently. Longer duration also negatively affects motivation to adopt and maintain HIV protecting behaviors (Collins and Slesnick, 2011; Rew et al., 2008). Additionally, longer durations of homelessness resulted in greater difficulty exiting homelessness among a sample (N=1,677) of Australian people who first experienced homelessness when they were 18 years old or younger (Johnson and Chamberlain, 2008).

Trauma history was another area in which experiences differed between cisgender LGBTQ YA and transgender YA. Researchers found statistically significant differences across seven of nine indicators of past trauma, with survey respondents reporting that a higher proportion of transgender YA (compared to cisgender LGBTQ YA) had histories of harassment and bullying, intimate partner violence, family rejection, physical, sexual or emotional abuse, mental health issues, sexual exploitation, and alcohol or substance abuse (Choi et al., 2015). Recent literature also identified unique challenges faced by transgender YA and Latino gay and bisexual male YA experiencing homelessness (Shelton and Bond 2017; Shelton, 2015; Castellanos, 2016). These findings point to differential experiences among subgroups of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness that warrant further investigation. Such disaggregation is necessary for the development of effective homelessness prevention and family reconnection efforts (Shelton, 2015; Castellanos, 2016).

Burgeoning research has focused on specific subgroups within the population of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness across intersections of race, sexual orientation, and gender identity. Intersectional approaches consider the ways in which multiple social categories collectively shape an individual's experiences of oppression, power, and privilege (Crenshaw, 1991). An intersectional understanding of the ways in which race/ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation interact with the experience of homelessness is a critical step in informing interventions aimed at addressing YA homelessness. Race, gender identity, and sexual orientation do not operate as mutually exclusive categories; rather, they operate as "reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities" (Collins, 2015: 2). In their investigation of microaggressions and mental health among Black youth experiencing homelessness, Gattis and Larson (2017) underscore the importance of comprehensively addressing how subtle, pervasive forms of heterosexism, gender normativity, and racism affect the mental health of YA experiencing homelessness.

Other research has examined the pathways into homelessness through an intersectional lens. Begun and Kattari (2016) found that transgender people of color were more likely to experience

housing instability than their White counterparts. Specifically, respondents who identified as Black or African-American, American Indian or Alaskan Native, biracial or multiracial were significantly more likely than their White counterparts to have experienced homelessness or sought temporary sleeping arrangements due to their gender identity (Begun and Kattari, 2016). Though the study did not focus specifically on YA (participant ages ranged from 18 to 98, with a mean age of 36.7), findings demonstrate the increased barriers encountered by transgender people of color in comparison to their White counterparts.

Findings from these studies underscore the importance of disaggregating the experiences of LGBTQ YA of different races and gender identities to identify service-related barriers and to support their specific needs and reasons for homelessness. Castellanos (2016) suggests that such disaggregation is necessary for the development of effective homelessness prevention and intervention efforts.

This study describes the reported reasons LGBTQ YA experience homelessness, characteristics of homelessness (that is, age at first homelessness, total length of time homeless, and current living situation), and stress and coping (that is, experiences of discrimination, difficulty finding resources, desire for help, positive coping strategies).

Methods

Interdisciplinary homeless YA researchers from around the country developed a national research collaborative called REALYST (<http://www.realyt.org>) between universities and homeless youth-serving organizations to examine and compare risk and resilience characteristics of YA experiencing homelessness (aged 18–26) across seven cities in the United States. This national study was conducted in 2016–17 in Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, New York City, Phoenix, San Jose, and St. Louis. Data were collected using tablets to deliver a self-administered survey. The collaborative developed and used a standardized study protocol and assessment tool—the Homeless Youth Risk and Resilience Survey—across all study sites.

Research settings

To broaden our understanding of YA homelessness in various regions, an initial cohort of seven cities (located within distinct U.S. Census areas and with a lead university investigator and host organization in each city) were selected. Using a cross-sectional study design, study investigators in each university collaborated with agencies serving YA experiencing homelessness in each city. Participating agencies were non-profit organizations offering a range of services including shelter, transitional housing, street outreach, and drop-in services to YA experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness. Human subjects' approval was received by each investigator's university. Each investigator independently funded data collection at its site, including the purchase of participant incentives and support for local research assistants.

Sample and recruitment

A standardized protocol for recruiting and screening potential participants was used across research sites. Using purposive sampling, researchers and trained research assistants recruited

approximately 200 unique English speaking YA who were experiencing homelessness and seeking services at host agencies in each city. Sites intentionally sampled from different service outlets (for example, drop-in centers, shelters, transitional housing programs) to capture the varied experiences and characteristics of YA accessing a range of services. All YA accessing services during the data collection period were asked to participate in an eligibility screener. Due to challenges in consenting minors at host agencies and an interest in the YA developmental stage, the eligibility screener assessed if potential participants were within the required age range (18–26 years old). The screener also assessed whether potential participants were considered homeless or unstably housed, defined as spending the prior night on the streets, in a location not meant for human habitation, in a shelter, in an apartment provided through a temporary housing voucher, or staying temporarily with friends, acquaintances, or family where they could not stay for more than 30 days. Informed consent documents were reviewed with eligible participants. Interested participants consented to the study by clicking a box on the tablet-delivered survey.

Data collection

After YA consented to participate in the study, an anonymous person identification code was generated for each participant that allowed for assessment of duplication across data collection sites within and across cities. Next, YA completed the REALM-SF (Murphy et al., 1993) screener for health literacy, which was modified to reflect topics and words that would come up in the survey. If YA scored between 1 and 3 (out of 9) on the REALM-SF, they were encouraged to have the survey read aloud to them by the researchers in a private setting. Those with scores higher than 3 were asked to complete the self-administered survey independently. Study staff were available to assist participants as needed throughout the survey implementation. Self-administering reduced concern for social desirability associated with face-to-face disclosure of sensitive information (Phillips et al., 2010). The tablet displayed a slide bar showing the participant's progress throughout the survey and included reminders of anonymity. The survey took approximately 50 minutes to complete. Participants received a \$10–20 gift card (depending on site) to a local store for completing the survey.

Measures

The survey included demographic questions, including age and race/ethnicity. Response options for race/ethnicity included: White or Caucasian (not Hispanic or Latino), Black or African-American (not Hispanic or Latino), Hispanic or Latino, American Indian, Asian or Pacific Islander, Multiracial/Mixed Race, and Other. Participants were asked to select a single category they felt best described their racial and ethnic identity. Data for this analysis included only participants who self-identified as White or Caucasian (not Hispanic or Latino), Black or African-American (not Hispanic or Latino), or Hispanic or Latino. Participants who identified themselves as multiracial/mixed race were not included, since the survey did not inquire about the specific identities that made up their multiracial identity.

Sexual orientation and gender identity were measured using questions previously tested among a geographically and racially diverse population of LGBT and non-LGBT health clinic patients (Cahill et al., 2014). Response options for sexual orientation included gay or lesbian; straight, that is, not gay; bisexual; something else (please specify); and I don't know/questioning. For this

study, all youth who reported that their sexuality was something other than straight or heterosexual were included in the LGBTQ subsample. Gender identity was measured using a two-part gender identity question. The first question asked respondents their current gender identity. Respondents could select multiple responses from the following options: Male; Female; Transgender Male/Trans Man/Female-to-Male; Transgender Female/Trans Female/Male-to-Female; Genderqueer, neither exclusively male nor female; Additional Gender Category (or other); Decline to Answer, please explain why. The second question asked respondents to choose the sex assigned on their original birth certificate (Male or Female). For the purpose of this study, youth were coded as transgender if they 1) reported a gender identity other than “male” or “female” or 2) reported a “male” or “female” current gender identity that did not match the sex assigned on their birth certificate. The transgender subsample thus includes youth with a diversity of transfeminine, transmasculine, and non-binary gender identities.

The survey also inquired about reasons for homelessness. Participants could select from 18 categories: I was kicked out/asked to leave my family home, my foster home, my relative’s home, my group home; I ran away from my family home, my foster family home, my relative’s home, my group home; I aged out of the foster care system; I aged out of the juvenile justice system; I couldn’t pay rent; I had no place to go when I got out of jail/prison; I had no place to go when I got out of the hospital; I left a situation of domestic violence; I left a gang or a neighborhood with gang violence; My family does not have a stable place to stay; I had no place to stay when I moved here; or Other.

The survey queried youth about a set of homelessness characteristics, including the age of their first homelessness episode, duration of homelessness (How long have you been without a stable place to stay/homeless in this most recent episode/this time?), and current housing situation. Housing situations were sorted into three groups: 1) couch surfing, or staying with friends, family, strangers, or sexual partners for an undetermined period of time; 2) housed, or currently staying at an institution such as a shelter or transitional housing program; and 3) outside, or currently sleeping in a public place such as a park, abandoned building, or on public transportation. Duration of homelessness was recoded into three categories: short-term homelessness (less than 6 months), medium-term homelessness (6 months to 2 years) and long-term homelessness (greater than 2 years).

Finally, participants were also asked about the stressors experienced while homeless and the forms of coping they used. This included forms of discrimination as measured by the Everyday Discrimination Scale (Milburn et al., 2010), which asks how often participants experience discrimination (such as being treated with less courtesy than others, people acting as if they are afraid of you, or being threatened or harassed) in their day-to-day life. Choices were never, less than once a year, a few times a year, at least once a week, or always. Participants were also asked to identify the reasons for the discriminatory experiences, selecting from the following options: your ancestry or national origin, gender, gender identity/gender expression, race, your age, religion, height, weight, sexual orientation, housing status (that is, being homeless or without a stable place to live), education or income level, or some other aspect of your physical appearance.

Use of positive coping strategies was measured using items from the Coping Scale (Kidd and Carol, 2007). That method considers whether youth never, rarely, sometimes, or often use specific

strategies to deal with problems. Strategies youth might use include concentrate on what to do and how to solve the problem, go to someone I trust for support, try to value myself and not think so much about other people's opinions, realize that I am strong and can deal with whatever is bothering me, and use my spiritual beliefs/belief in a higher power. These items were subsequently recoded for analysis to report the frequency and percentage of youth who sometimes or often engaged in each of five positive coping strategies.

Desire for help with housing was assessed using a five-point Likert scale. The single item asked YA how strongly they agreed with the statement "I need help in dealing with my housing situation." This was subsequently recoded to report the frequency and percentage of youth who agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

Stress finding certain resources on the streets was assessed using items from the Rew Stress of the Streets Scale (Rew et al., 2016). The survey asked how much (none at all, a little, more than a little, a lot) participants felt stress in the previous month about finding enough food to eat, a place to sleep, a place to bathe or shower, a place to wash clothes, work, or a way to earn money. Participants rated each item as either none at all, a little, more than a little, or a lot.

Data analysis

To explore differences in homeless experiences among homeless LGBTQ YA subgroups, we conducted the following analyses. First, we used descriptive statistics (that is, frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) to characterize the homelessness and housing experiences of the full sample of LGBTQ YA. Second, we used the same descriptive statistics to describe specific subgroups, with particular focus on YA who identified as transgender and bisexual. This allowed for an examination of traditionally understudied and potentially more marginalized subgroups within the population of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness. Finally, the full sample and subgroups (bisexual YA and transgender YA) were described through the intersection of race/ethnicity. Specifically, descriptive statistics and bivariate analysis (that is, chi square and independent t-tests) were used to describe and compare the homelessness and housing experiences of Black, Latino, and White YA within the full LGBTQ sample and the transgender and bisexual subsamples.

Results

Descriptive characteristics of the sample

The full sample consisted of 442 LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness. For gender identity, the sample identified as 43 percent female (n=189), 32.7 percent male (n=144), and 24.3 percent gender minority (n=107). As for sexual orientation, the sample identified as 46 percent bisexual YA (n=205), 27.6 percent gay or lesbian, 13.3 percent something else (n=59), 7.7 percent straight (n=34), and 4.3 percent questioning (n=19). Participants averaged 20.9 years old (SD=2.1). A racially diverse sample, 82 percent were YA of color (n=361). Specifically, 30 percent identified as Black (n=133), 21.9 percent as mixed race (n=97), 16 percent as Latino (n=72), 18 percent as White (n=80), and 13.3 percent as something else (n=59).

Housing and homelessness experiences among LGBTQ youth and YA

Reasons for homelessness. YA survey respondents were asked to identify why they became homeless by selecting all applicable reasons from a list of 18 possible answers. A substantial number of LGBTQ YA reported being kicked out/asked to leave their previous living arrangement. Specifically, the majority reported being kicked out/asked to leave their family home by their parents (70 percent) or another relative (25 percent). Other LGBTQ YA reported being kicked out of child welfare placements, such as foster homes (18 percent) or group homes (11 percent). In addition to being kicked out, many reported running away from their parents' house (38 percent), another relative's home (16 percent), a foster home (12 percent), or a group home (10 percent). More LGBTQ YA reported aging out of foster care (18 percent) than juvenile justice services (8 percent). Poverty played a clear role in reasons for homelessness. Many respondents said they became homeless after they could no longer afford rent (35 percent) or because their family became homeless (18 percent). Nearly a third (29 percent) reported that they became homeless due to domestic violence, although it is unclear if this violence was from intimate partners or from parental or other familial figures or if the participant was a direct victim of domestic violence or a witness to it. Additionally, 31 percent of respondents reported that they became homeless after moving to a new city and having nowhere to live.

Characteristics of homelessness. The average age at which LGBTQ YA reported first experiencing homelessness was 17, although this mean should be considered within the context of a limited study inclusion criteria of ages 18–26 at the time of data collection. Nearly a third (30 percent) of LGBTQ YA respondents reported being homeless fewer than 6 months; 38 percent reported being homeless for 6 months to 2 years, and 32 percent reported being homeless more than 2 years. Respondents reported a variety of current living situations. Over half of LGBTQ respondents (56 percent) stayed at an institutional setting such as a shelter, hospital, or transitional housing program the previous night. A quarter (25 percent) reported they were currently staying outside, in a park or abandoned building, or sleeping on public transportation. Nearly a fifth (18 percent) reported they were couch surfing or temporarily staying with family, friends, relatives, or sexual partners.

Stressors. YA respondents experienced stress while homeless. LGBTQ YA were particularly stressed about earning money (64 percent) and being unable to find work (58 percent). Nearly half of the sample also reported stress over meeting their own basic needs, including finding a place to sleep (48 percent), food to eat (45 percent), a place to wash their clothes (44 percent), and a place to shower or wash themselves (42 percent).

Many LGBTQ YA reported experiencing discrimination while homeless. Approximately a third of respondents reported experiencing discrimination due to their gender (36 percent) or their gender identity or expression (30 percent). Many experienced discrimination due to their sexual orientation (41 percent) or their race (39 percent). Identity categories were not the only source of discrimination, as 45 percent of LGBTQ YA respondents perceived that they were experiencing discrimination due to their housing status.

The majority of LGBTQ YA reported engaging in positive coping strategies to deal with their problems. Strategies included concentrating on solving the problem (75 percent), recognizing

one’s own strength and resiliency (74 percent), and valuing one’s self over worrying about others’ opinions (70.2 percent). Coping strategies less common but still endorsed by more than half this group were going to someone trusted for support (59.5 percent) and relying on spirituality or belief in a higher power (58.9 percent). Two-thirds of LGBTQ YA (66 percent) also reported a desire for help with obtaining housing. (Note: this scale only asks about engaging in positive coping strategies—not negative ones).

Housing and homelessness experiences among bisexual and transgender subgroups

Our second research question examined the experiences of particularly marginalized and understudied subgroups among the population of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness, namely bisexual and transgender YA. These two subgroups were examined specifically because of their increased vulnerability and limited representation in previous studies of LGBTQ youth homelessness. Exhibit 1 provides descriptive results for the full sample, as well as for the bisexual and transgender subsamples. Because these subgroup categories are not mutually exclusive (for example, one can be a bisexual as well as transgender), statistical comparisons were not run between the full LGBTQ sample and the transgender and bisexual subsamples. Some patterns are worth noting, however, in describing the transgender and bisexual subgroups.

Exhibit 1

Comparison of Homelessness Experiences Across Full LGBTQ Sample, Transgender Subsample, and Bisexual Subsample (N=442)

	LGBTQ n=442 Freq (%)	Transgender n=107 Freq (%)	Bisexual n=205 Freq (%)
Reason for homelessness			
Kicked out			
Family home	223 (70.3)	58 (75.3)	98 (66.7)
Foster home	35 (18)	11 (26.2)	14 (14.6)
Relative’s home	53 (25.2)	14 (31.1)	22 (21)
Group home	20 (10.9)	4 (10.8)	8 (8.7)
Ran away			
Family home	86 (38.2)	23 (46.9)	41 (36.3)
Foster home	23 (12.2)	8 (20)	8 (8.4)
Relative’s home	30 (15.8)	8 (20.5)	14 (14.4)
Group home	18 (9.8)	5 (13.5)	8 (8.5)
Aged out of foster care	34 (17.9)	10 (25)	15 (15.5)
Aged out of juvenile justice	14 (7.7)	3 (8.3)	9 (9.5)
Can’t pay rent	74 (35.2)	20 (43.5)	31 (29.8)
Nowhere to go after prison	15 (8.3)	7 (19.4)	2 (2.2)
Exiting hospital	18 (9.9)	4 (10.8)	10 (10.5)
Domestic violence	62 (29.4)	17 (36.2)	31 (29.2)
Left gang	11 (6.2)	2 (5.6)	5 (5.6)
Family homelessness	35 (17.5)	7 (17.5)	19 (18.4)
Moved and had no place to live	67 (31.2)	21 (43.8)	22 (21.4)

Exhibit 1

Comparison of Homelessness Experiences Across Full LGBTQ Sample, Transgender Subsample, and Bisexual Subsample (N=442)

	LGBTQ n=442 Freq (%)	Transgender n=107 Freq (%)	Bisexual n=205 Freq (%)
Characteristics of homelessness			
Duration of homelessness			
Short term (<6 months)	132 (29.9)	35 (32.7)	60 (29.3)
Medium term (6 months–2 years)	168 (38.1)	37 (34.6)	76 (37.1)
Long term (>2 years)	141 (32)	35 (32.7)	69 (33.7)
Living situation			
Couch surfing	81 (18.3)	14 (13.1)	35 (17.1)
Housed	247 (55.9)	70 (65.4)	115 (56.1)
Outside	111 (25.1)	22 (20.6)	53 (25.9)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
Age first homeless	17.22 (3.55)	17.8 (3.05)	17 (3.65)
Stress and coping			
Discrimination			
Gender	136 (35.8)	44 (49.4)	52 (29.1)
Gender identity/expression	112 (29.5)	54 (60.7)	31 (17.3)
Race	148 (38.9)	31 (34.8)	59 (33)
Sexual orientation	156 (41.1)	53 (59.6)	47 (26.3)
Housing status	171 (45)	35 (39.3)	88 (49.2)
Stress in finding resources			
Place to sleep	210 (48.3)	46 (43.8)	103 (50.7)
Food to eat	197 (45.4)	48 (46.2)	99 (48.8)
Shower	183 (42.4)	33 (31.7)	91 (44.8)
Wash clothes	190 (44.2)	33 (32.4)	101 (50)
Earning money	279 (64.4)	76 (73.1)	135 (66.5)
Work	251 (58.1)	58 (55.2)	125 (61.9)
Desire for help with housing	289 (66.3)	71 (67.6)	135 (66.5)
Coping strategies			
Concentrated and problem solve	327 (75.0)	74 (70.5)	154 (75.9)
Go to someone for support	257 (59.5)	68 (65.4)	133 (65.8)
Value self over others' opinions	304 (70.2)	69 (66.3)	135 (66.8)
Recognize own strength	320 (73.9)	74 (70.5)	144 (71.3)
Rely on spirituality	259 (59.8)	61 (58.1)	121 (59.9)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)

Transgender YA. Compared to the full LGBTQ sample, transgender YA reported higher frequencies of running away or being kicked out of their family home, foster home, or relative's home. Transgender YA more often reported becoming homeless due to an inability to pay rent or having nowhere to go after leaving prison or moving to a new city.

Higher percentages of transgender YA reported experiencing discrimination due to their gender, gender identity, or gender expression. Compared to the full LGBTQ sample, higher percentages of transgender YA also reported discrimination due to their sexual orientation, indicating that although sexual orientation and gender identity are two separate entities, many transgender YA have minority sexual orientations. Interestingly, transgender YA were no more likely, compared to the full LGBTQ sample, to report stress in finding a place to shower or to sleep while experiencing homelessness. This is surprising, given the difficulty many transgender people face when trying to access sex-segregated services, such as restrooms or dormitories. Transgender YA reported coping strategies quite similar to the broader LGBTQ sample, with slightly more seeking support from someone they trust (65.4 percent) and slightly fewer concentrating on problem solving (70.5 percent). Transgender YA reported a similar desire for help obtaining housing (68 percent) as the full sample of LGBTQ YA.

Bisexual YA. Bisexual YA in the sample did not report many differences from the full sample of LGBTQ YA as a whole. They were less likely to report discrimination due to sexual orientation, perhaps because they may be in opposite-sex relationships or be less open about their sexual orientation. They were also less likely to have become homeless due to leaving prison or because they moved and had no place to live. Most other characteristics were strikingly similar to those found in the full LGBTQ sample.

Housing and homelessness experiences across Black, Latino, and White members of the LGBTQ, bisexual, and transgender subgroups

Exhibit 2 shows statistical comparison of racial groups within the LGBTQ, bisexual, and transgender subsamples. When possible, statistical tests examined differences between racial groups in both the full LGBTQ sample and the transgender and bisexual subsamples. As for reasons for homelessness, White and Latino LGBTQ YA were significantly more likely to report becoming homeless because they could not pay rent than their Black LGBTQ peers ($p < 0.05$).

Exhibit 2

Comparison across Racial Categories within LGBTQ Sample, Trans Subsample, and Bisexual Subsample (n=285)

Reason for homelessness	Black LGBTQ n=133		Latino LGBTQ n=72		White LGBTQ n=80		Black Trans n=18		Latino Trans n=21		White Trans n=17		Black Bisexual n=68		Latino Bisexual n=35		White Bisexual n=37		X ²
	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	
Kicked out																			
Family home	72 (75)	41 (85.4)	44 (68.8)	4.14	9 (75)	12 (85.7)	11 (84.6)	0.59	36 (70.6)	19 (82.6)	18 (62.1)	2.63							
Foster home	11 (20.4)	3 (16.7)	10 (20.8)	0.15	1 (16.7)	2 (40)	2 (25)	0.78	5 (17.2)	2 (25)	5 (19.2)	0.25							
Relative's home	19 (29.7)	7 (31.8)	9 (20)	1.62	2 (28.6)	2 (40)	3 (37.5)	0.2	9 (25.7)	4 (40)	4 (16)	2.31							
Group home	2 (4.3)	2 (11.1)	6 (13.3)	2.4	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (25)	2.29	1 (3.8)	2 (22.2)	2 (8)	2.96							
Ran away																			
Family home	18 (31)	13 (46.4)	18 (36.7)	1.94	2 (33.3)	3 (50)	5 (50)	0.49	10 (32.3)	9 (60)	7 (28)	4.59							
Foster home	3 (6.1)	4 (20)	5 (11.1)	2.93	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (12.5)	1.07	2 (7.4)	2 (22.2)	2 (8)	1.83							
Relative's home	9 (17)	2 (11.1)	7 (15.6)	0.35	0 (0)	1 (25)	1 (14.3)	1.3	5 (16.7)	1 (12.5)	4 (16)	0.08							
Group home	3 (6.1)	3 (15.8)	5 (10.9)	1.6	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (12.5)	1.07	1 (3.8)	2 (22.2)	3 (11.5)	2.69							
Aged out of foster care	6 (11.5)	3 (16.7)	8 (17.8)	0.8	2 (28.6)	1 (25)	0 (0)	2.31	3 (10.7)	3 (33.3)	3 (12.5)	2.93							
Aged out of juvenile justice	3 (6.1)	1 (5.9)	6 (13)	1.63	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (12.5)	1.07	2 (7.4)	1 (12.5)	4 (15.4)	0.84							
Could not pay rent	14 (26.4)	13 (48.1)	27 (49.1)	6.72*	1 (16.7)	5 (62.5)	6 (60)	3.57	6 (20.7)	7 (53.8)	11 (39.3)	4.9							
Nowhere to go after prison	4 (8)	2 (11.1)	4 (8.9)	0.16	1 (20)	0 (0)	2 (25)	0.9	0 (0)	0 (0)	2 (8)	2.73							
Exiting hospital	2 (4.1)	2 (11.8)	7 (14.9)	2.29	1 (16.7)	0 (0)	2 (22.2)	0.8	1 (3.7)	1 (12.5)	4 (14.8)	1.99							
Domestic violence	13 (23.6)	9 (36)	13 (26.5)	1.34	2 (33.3)	3 (50)	4 (40)	0.35	8 (26.7)	4 (46.2)	4 (15.4)	4.27							
Left gang	1 (2.1)	1 (6.3)	2 (4.5)	0.7	0 (0)	0 (0)	1 (12.5)	1.07	0 (0)	1 (14.3)	1 (4)	3.42							
Family homelessness	10 (17.9)	4 (20)	9 (18.4)	0.05	1 (16.7)	0 (0)	3 (30)	1.35	4 (13.8)	4 (36.4)	3 (11.5)	3.74							
Moved and had no place to live	11 (20)	8 (38.1)	16 (31.4)	3.11	3 (42.9)	3 (60)	5 (50)	0.34	6 (19.4)	2 (22.2)	3 (11.5)	0.85							

Exhibit 2

Comparison across Racial Categories within LGBTQ Sample, Trans Subsample, and Bisexual Subsample (n=285)

	Black LGBTQ n=133	Latino LGBTQ n=72	White LGBTQ n=80	Black Trans n=18	Latino Trans n=21	White Trans n=17	Black Bisexual n=68	Latino Bisexual n=35	White Bisexual n=37	
	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	Freq (%)	
	X ²	X ²	X ²	X ²	X ²	X ²	X ²	X ²	X ²	
Characteristics of homelessness										
Duration of homelessness				8.38			6.64			10.98*
Short term (<6 months)	49 (36.8)	18 (25)	18 (22.5)	6 (33.3)	2 (28.6)	5 (29.4)	28 (41.2)	6 (17.1)	8 (21.6)	
Medium term (6 months-2 years)	54 (40.6)	28 (38.9)	34 (42.5)	11 (61.1)	7 (33.3)	6 (35.3)	26 (38.2)	13 (37.1)	15 (40.5)	
Long term (>2 years)	30 (22.6)	26 (36.1)	28 (35)	1 (5.6)	8 (38.1)	6 (35.3)	14 (20.6)	16 (45.7)	14 (37.8)	
Living situation										
Couch surfing (staying with family, foster, relative, friend, sexual partner, hotel)	36 (27.1)	10 (13.9)	9 (11.3)	3 (16.7)	1 (4.8)	2 (11.8)	15 (22.1)	4 (11.4)	6 (16.2)	1.87
Housed (Shelter/institution/own apartment/transitional housing)	76 (57.1)	42 (58.3)	44 (55)	11 (61.1)	13 (61.9)	12 (70.6)	44 (64.7)	22 (62.9)	17 (45.9)	3.74
Outside (street, park, abandoned building, public transportation)	20 (15)	20 (27.8)	27 (33.8)	3 (16.7)	7 (33.3)	3 (17.6)	9 (13.2)	9 (25.7)	14 (37.8)	8.44*
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	t
Age first homeless	17.12 (3)	17.18 (3.63)	17.03 (3.99)	18.11 (1.84)	18.05 (2.5)	17.12 (4.39)	17.24 (2.99)	16.6 (3.77)	17.14 (4.12)	.44
	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t	t
	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.04	.59	.59	.59	.59
Stress and Coping										
Discrimination										
Gender	33 (30.6)	27 (44.3)	25 (33.8)	6 (50)	7 (38.9)	10 (58.8)	14 (25)	13 (41.9)	8 (23.5)	3.45
Gender identity/expression	27 (25)	20 (32.8)	24 (32.4)	7 (58.3)	9 (50)	11 (64.7)	11 (19.6)	9 (29)	4 (11.8)	3.04
Race	52 (48.1)	21 (34.4)	18 (24.3)	8 (66.7)	7 (38.9)	3 (17.6)	26 (46.4)	8 (25.8)	5 (14.7)	10.52*
Sexual orientation	39 (36.1)	20 (32.8)	35 (47.3)	7 (58.3)	6 (33.3)	14 (82.4)	32 (57.1)	8 (25.8)	8 (23.5)	0.12
Housing status	51 (47.2)	27 (44.3)	40 (54.1)	6 (50)	6 (33.3)	8 (47.1)	18 (58.1)	15 (44.1)	15 (44.1)	1.76

Exhibit 2

Comparison across Racial Categories within LGBTQ Sample, Trans Subsample, and Bisexual Subsample (n=285)

	Black LGBTQ n=133		Latino LGBTQ n=72		White LGBTQ n=80		Black Trans n=18		Latino Trans n=21		White Trans n=17		Black Bisexual n=68		Latino Bisexual n=35		White Bisexual n=37	
	Freq (%)	Mean (SD)	Freq (%)	Mean (SD)	Freq (%)	Mean (SD)	Freq (%)	Mean (SD)	Freq (%)	Mean (SD)	Freq (%)	Mean (SD)	Freq (%)	Mean (SD)	Freq (%)	Mean (SD)	Freq (%)	Mean (SD)
Stress in finding resources																		
Place to sleep	60 (45.1)	37 (51.4)	34 (43)	1.16	6 (33.3)	12 (57.1)	8 (47.1)	2.21	33 (48.5)	19 (54.3)	13 (35.1)	2.89						
Food to eat	53 (40.2)	35 (49.3)	38 (48.1)	2.08	5 (27.8)	11 (55)	11 (64.7)	5.21	31 (45.6)	18 (51.4)	18 (43.2)	0.52						
Shower	55 (41.7)	28 (38.9)	30 (38.5)	0.27	4 (22.2)	9 (42.9)	4 (23.5)	2.49	33 (48.5)	11 (31.4)	14 (37.8)	3.05						
Wash clothes	58 (43.6)	31 (43.7)	31 (39.7)	0.35	4 (22.2)	8 (40)	6 (35.3)	1.43	35 (51.5)	17 (48.6)	14 (37.8)	1.82						
Earning money	82 (62.1)	53 (73.6)	52 (65.8)	2.75	11 (61.1)	18 (85.7)	14 (82.4)	3.72	42 (61.8)	28 (80)	26 (70.3)	3.63						
Work	77 (58.3)	44 (62)	48 (60.8)	0.29	10 (55.6)	10 (47.6)	13 (76.5)	3.36	41 (61.2)	26 (74.3)	23 (62.2)	1.87						
Desire for help with housing	90 (67.7)	51 (70.8)	50 (63.3)	0.99	12 (66.7)	18 (85.7)	14 (82.4)	2.3	46 (67.6)	25 (71.4)	21 (56.8)	1.94						
Coping strategies																		
Concentrate and problem solve	98 (73.7)	52 (72.2)	66 (83.5)	3.43	14 (77.8)	11 (52.4)	14 (82.4)	4.82~	50 (73.5)	29 (82.9)	12 (75.0)	.566						
Go to someone for support	75 (56.8)	41 (56.9)	54 (68.4)	3.14	9 (50.0)	13 (61.9)	16 (94.1)	8.35*	42 (61.8)	23 (65.7)	14 (93.3)	5.57~						
Value self over others' opinions	91 (68.4)	48 (67.7)	60 (75.9)	1.68	12 (66.7)	11 (55.0)	11 (64.7)	.633	41 (60.3)	24 (68.6)	11 (68.8)	.877						
Recognize own strength	93 (70.5)	53 (73.6)	63 (79.7)	2.21	13 (72.2)	14 (66.7)	13 (76.5)	.451	43 (63.2)	25 (71.4)	13 (81.3)	2.19						
Rely on spirituality	81 (61.4)	37 (51.4)	42 (53.2)	2.39	8 (44.4)	12 (57.1)	7 (41.2)	1.11	44 (64.7)	19 (54.3)	73 (61.3)	1.07						
Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	t	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	t	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	t						

~ = p<.1; * = p<.05; ** = p<.01

Related to characteristics of homelessness, among bisexual YA, significant racial/ethnic differences in the duration of homelessness ($p < 0.05$) occurred, with Black YA more likely to report having been homeless for less than 6 months and Latino YA more likely to report having been homeless for more than 2 years. There were also significant racial/ethnic differences in where YA reported staying at the time of the survey. Black LGBTQ YA reported higher instances of couch surfing, or staying for an indefinite amount of time with friends, family, strangers, or sexual partners, than White or Latino LGBTQ YA ($p < 0.01$). White LGBTQ YA ($p < 0.01$) and White bisexual YA ($p < 0.05$) reported higher frequencies of staying outside, in a public place or an abandoned building, or sleeping on public transportation than Black or Latino LGBTQ YA and Black or Latino YA, respectively.

When it came to discrimination and coping, Black and Latino YA reported higher frequencies of racial discrimination compared to their White peers within the three examined groups (the full LGBTQ sample, transgender, and bisexual subgroups). White transgender YA were more likely to report discrimination due to sexual orientation than transgender Black or Latino YA ($p < 0.05$). For coping strategies, White youth were significantly more likely than Black or Latino YA to go to someone they trusted for support. This strategy was true among transgender YA ($p < .05$) and marginally true among bisexual YA ($p < .10$). No other significant differences were found, with about half to three-quarters of YA in each intersectional group reporting each positive coping strategy.

Some other differences were not statistically significant but nonetheless indicated patterns of racial/ethnic differences. For example, across all groups (the full LGBTQ sample and the transgender and bisexual subsamples), Latino YA reported higher frequencies of being kicked out of their family home than White or Black YA. Latino bisexual YA reported higher frequencies of running away from their family home than Black or White bisexual YA. Latino YA (in the full LGBTQ sample and the transgender and bisexual subsamples) were more likely to report stress related to finding a place to sleep and reported a desire for help with housing at a higher frequency than their Black and White counterparts.

Discussion and Implications

This study provides a current account of the homeless experiences of LGBTQ YA. Representing one of the largest samples of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness to date, this study examined specific subpopulations as well, including Black and Latino LGBTQ YA, transgender YA, and bisexual YA. Each of these subpopulations experiencing homelessness has received scant attention in the literature, and LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness are rarely examined outside of their risks in comparison to non-LGBTQ YA. As such, this study fills two critical gaps in the literature. First, the study describes the population of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness in more detail across multiple regions of the United States. Second, the study identifies differential experiences of subgroups within the population that can better inform program and policy interventions designed to prevent and end homelessness among YA.

LGBTQ YA identified varied pathways into homelessness. Consistent with the literature (Shelton and Bond, 2017; Choi et al., 2015; Durso and Gates, 2012; Rew et al., 2005; Whitbeck et al., 2004), the majority of study participants reported being kicked out or asked to leave their parents' homes, their relatives' homes, or foster and group homes. Transgender YA were more likely to

report being kicked out/asked to leave their homes. This may indicate lower levels of awareness, understanding, and acceptance of transgender identities within communities and families compared to gay, lesbian, and bisexual identities—mirroring societal attitudes at large. Though the survey did not inquire about the specific reasons they were kicked out/asked to leave, findings highlight the need for policy and programmatic homeless prevention strategies targeting the families of LGBTQ YA and the systems within which they are involved.

Findings also highlight additional factors leading to homelessness for LGBTQ YA, particularly the role of poverty. Just over one-third (35 percent) of respondents became homeless because they could no longer afford to pay rent, emphasizing the importance of short-term rental assistance and affordable housing options as homelessness prevention strategies for LGBTQ YA. An additional 18 percent reported becoming homeless because their family became homeless. Additionally, 31 percent of respondents reported becoming homeless after relocating to a new city and having no place to live. One possible explanation of this finding could be due to LGBTQ YA moving from less accepting environments to urban centers in search of a more LGBTQ-inclusive environment. Additional research can further investigate the reasons associated with such moves.

The role of poverty in LGBTQ YA homelessness has implications for policy and practice. From a practice perspective, programs often presume that YA experiencing homelessness are in need of a range of microlevel interventions related to individual skill building, symptom management, or behavioral modification. While this may be true for some YA, interventions based solely on this presumption may not be effectively engaging and serving YA whose experience of homelessness was precipitated by a financial crisis. Individualized assessment reasons for homelessness should help discern the types of interventions most suitable for YA. Communities around the country are implementing this practice through coordinated entry and assessment. If YA are not deemed highly vulnerable during the assessment process, however, they are not often prioritized for services. This makes conceptual sense—to service those most in need—but it leaves out those who would most benefit from minimal intervention. Findings point to the need for exploring and identifying potential policy and programmatic solutions such as short-term rental assistance, universal basic income, and affordable housing options for YA experiencing homelessness.

Durations of homelessness were nearly evenly distributed between short-term homelessness (<6 months), medium-term homelessness (6 months to 2 years), and long-term homelessness (>2 years) when examined among the entire sample of LGBTQ YA, as well as among the subsample of transgender youth and the subsample of bisexual youth. Respondents were slightly more likely to report medium-term homelessness. Examining durations of homelessness among subgroups revealed significant differences among bisexual youth. Black bisexual YA were more likely to report having been homeless for less than 6 months, while Latino bisexual YA were more likely to report having been homeless for more than 2 years. Further investigation is warranted, as reasons for differential durations of homelessness were not explored. A possible explanation for future exploration is the cultural resource of kinship structures in Black communities (Wilson, 1989). For example, the full sample of Black LGBTQ YA in this study reported higher instances of couch surfing or staying for an indefinite amount of time with friends, family, strangers, or sexual partners than the full sample of White or Latino LGBTQ YA. The availability of kinship networks may have contributed to the shorter periods of homelessness experienced by YA in this study. Conversely,

the extended durations of homelessness reported by Latino YA could be due, in part, to the lack of similar kinship structures.

While family is an integral part of Latino culture (Perez and Romo, 2011), family members may not be accessible to Latino YA experiencing homelessness. In this study, higher percentages of Latino YA reported being kicked out of their family homes than Black or White YA. Accessing family support may not be an option for this group. Family members of Latino YA may not be accessible for other reasons. For example, Latino YA who left their country of origin without their families or were separated by their families due to immigration policies may not have access to familial support systems. The survey did not inquire about immigration status or immigration experiences, however, so we could not explore this theory. Though not statistically significant, Latino YA (LGBTQ, transgender, and bisexual) reported a desire for help with housing at a higher frequency than their Black and White counterparts did. This finding, as well as the durations of homelessness, raises questions about the efficacy of YA homeless service organizations in engaging and retaining Latino LGBTQ YA in supportive services that could be investigated in future research.

Earning money was the biggest stress identified by all of the participants, followed by finding work. Transgender people in general report high rates of employment discrimination due to their gender identity or expression. Their unemployment rate is three times that of the general population (James et al., 2016). Unemployment and underemployment can make finding and maintaining stable housing incredibly difficult for YA, who may face discrimination from landlords due to age and lack of previous housing histories, credit histories, or other sources of external support that might make them desirable tenants.

Further, LGBTQ people lack universal protection from housing discrimination, and people of color often encounter racial discrimination on the housing market. In a recent study, nearly a quarter of transgender people surveyed (N=27,715) reported experiencing housing discrimination related to their gender identity. Transgender women of color were more likely to report housing discrimination, and participants who reported being kicked out of their family's homes due to their gender identity were almost twice as likely to report experiencing housing discrimination at the time of the survey (James et al., 2016). Given the frequency with which transgender YA in this study reported being kicked out or asked to leave their homes and the increased likelihood of experiencing housing discrimination among transgender adults ejected from their homes (James et al., 2016), it is important to identify programmatic and policy strategies for supporting transgender YA in maintaining safe and stable housing.

In addition to stress related to financial stability, LGBTQ YA reported experiencing discrimination related to their sexual orientation, gender identity, race, and housing status. Racial discrimination and discrimination related to housing status have been associated with depressive symptoms among Black YA (Gattis and Larson, 2016). In this study, Black and Latino YA were more likely to report discrimination due to their race or ethnicity. This supports previous findings (Gattis and Larson, 2017) that LGBTQ YA of color must contend with homophobia/transphobia and systemic racism and the subsequent effects as they navigate homelessness and housing instability. This finding highlights the oppressive structural dynamics of heterosexism, cisgenderism, and racism that inform the daily experiences of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness. It is incumbent upon

policy makers, organizational leaders, and YA homelessness advocates to extend their intervention efforts beyond individual supports and services to include structural interventions aimed at dismantling systems and institutions rooted in centuries of racist housing policy.

Study findings support the call for further research investigating the intersection of race/ethnicity and LGBTQ identities among vulnerable populations (Institute of Medicine, 2011). People of color are disproportionately impacted by homelessness (Jones, 2016), and LGBTQ YA of color were overrepresented in the current study. Future research should continue to disaggregate the experiences of subgroups within the population of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness. As the intersections of race/ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation contribute to differential experiences of homelessness among YA, these intersections should be considered in the development of future research design, policy, and programmatic interventions. It is imperative to uphold existing policies regarding the collection of sexual and gender identity data and to make guidance available where such policies do not yet exist.

Limitations

Consider certain limitations when interpreting the study findings. The cross-sectional study design limits the ability to identify causal relationships. The purposive sampling strategy in this study limits the generalizability of the study findings. YA participants were all service seeking, and it is not clear whether young people more disconnected from services would report similar rates of experiences as reported here. YA were sampled strategically from seven distinct geographic regions to gather data that reflects the experiences of a diverse sample of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness. Though regionally diverse, data were collected from urban environments within each region. Findings, therefore, may not reflect the experiences of LGBTQ YA in rural and suburban locales. The survey was provided only in English, which may have excluded the experiences of YA who were not English speaking, thus findings may not reflect the experiences of non-English speaking LGBTQ YA who may experience further marginalization and less access to services.

Also, because YA under age 18 were excluded from participating, we did not assess the experiences and needs of minors experiencing homelessness among this potentially more vulnerable group of young people. Findings indicate differential experiences among Latino LGBTQ YA, so future efforts should include opportunities for participation among Spanish speaking YA. Additionally, the current analyses do not include multiracial YA. Their exclusion is a study limitation, as some groups of multiracial YA experience discrimination based on their race/ethnicity. Further, the race/ethnicity categories do not align with the measurements used in the U.S. Census, limiting comparisons across samples in other existing datasets. Although this study extends previous research efforts by using standardized sampling and data collection methods across seven locations, the sample is not nationally representative. Additionally, this study relied on self-reporting, with no method of objective verification. Though the survey was fully self-administered to reduce social desirability of face-to-face disclosure of sensitive information, the possibility of inaccurate reporting exists nonetheless.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to examine the homelessness and housing experiences of LGBTQ YA, identify how these experiences differ among particularly marginalized and understudied subgroups of LGBTQ YA (bisexual and transgender identifying YA), and examine how experiences compare across racial subgroups within the LGBTQ, bisexual, and transgender YA samples. Findings highlight differential experiences among subgroups of LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness and support the disaggregation of understudied and multiply marginalized LGBTQ YA to address their needs more adequately. For example, in the full LGBTQ sample and the subsamples, higher percentages of Black YA reported experiencing racial discrimination, and higher percentages of Black transgender YA reported discrimination related to their housing status. Prior research finds racial discrimination and discrimination related to housing status are associated with depressive symptoms among Black YA (Gattis and Larson, 2016). The role of discrimination should be considered when developing programs and policies to support the mental health of Black YA experiencing homelessness.

Study findings also highlight differential experiences of transgender YA, including higher rates of aging out of foster care and higher rates of being kicked out of or running away from family and foster care settings than the full LGBTQ sample and the subsample of bisexual YA. Transgender YA were almost twice as likely to have been kicked out of or run away from foster care settings, suggesting a potential lack of trans-affirming foster parents and supportive foster care settings.

Significant differences were found in durations of homelessness between Black and Latino bisexual YA in this study. Latino YA were more likely than their Black and White peers to report stress related to finding a place to sleep and a desire for help with housing. These findings indicate that programmatic interventions may not be successfully engaging Latino YA. Despite its limitations, this study provides a foundation from which other researchers may further investigate the specific causes of and potential solutions for addressing the differential experiences found among LGBTQ YA experiencing homelessness.

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