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The Host Home Program Model for LGBTQ Youth Experiencing Homelessness: A Program Evaluation

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The Host Home Program Model for LGBTQ Youth Experiencing
Homelessness: A Program Evaluation

by

Megan M. McTeague, B.S.

MSW Clinical Research Paper

Presented to the Faculty of the
School of Social Work
St. Catherine University and the University of St. Thomas
In Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Social Work

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The Clinical Research Project is a graduation requirement for MSW students at St. Catherine University/University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, Minnesota and is conducted within a nine-month time frame to demonstrate facility with basic social research methods. Students must independently conceptualize a research problem, formulate a research design that is approved by a research committee and the university Institutional Review Board, implement the project, and publicly present the findings of the study. This project is neither a Master's thesis nor a dissertation.

Abstract

Youth homelessness is continually on the rise throughout the United States. While youth in general who are experiencing homelessness are at increased risk for victimization, chemical use/abuse, and mental health conditions such as depression and anxiety; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer/questioning (LGBTQ) youth are at much higher risk for these barriers to well-being, among others. This study evaluated one program that specifically serves LGBTQ youth who are experiencing homelessness. Using a qualitative design, individuals involved in the program were asked to fill out surveys and provide feedback about how the program meets its stated goals of providing shelter, meeting basic needs, and fostering a sense of community for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. Additionally, this study looked at how this program builds strength and resiliency for youth by fostering a sense of positive self-identity and increasing external supports for youth. The findings of this study indicate that this program model meets its stated goals by providing youth with “outside the system” supports in the form of volunteer host homes and providing ongoing case management and goal-planning with youth. The findings also suggest that the program’s focus on self-determination and community-based efforts from caring adults has a significantly positive impact on youth who participate in the program. These findings emphasize the importance of access to stable housing, external supports, and the development of positive self-identity for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness who are working towards achieving stable housing.

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Table of Contents

Abstract	2
Acknowledgements	3
Table of Contents	4
Introduction	5
Literature Review	8
Conceptual Framework	20
Methods	23
Research Question	23
Research Design	23
Sample	24
Protection of Human Participants and Confidentiality	24
Risk and Benefits	25
Data Collection Instrument and Process	26
Data Analysis Plan	26
Results	27
Housing	30
Self-Determination	36
Positive Relationships with Supportive Adults	38
Positive Self-Identity	42
Discussion	44
Implications for Social Work	51
Strengths and Limitations of the Study	52
Suggestions for Future Research	54
Conclusion	54
Appendices	56
References	67

Homelessness in the state of Minnesota is not an invisible issue. On street corners throughout the metro, homeless men and women are frequently seen holding signs declaring their current state of homelessness and asking for support. Several non-profit organizations and emergency shelters throughout the metropolitan area of the Twin Cities work to provide temporary and emergency services for homeless populations, such as hot meals, showers, and a place to sleep at night. Despite the many shelters, beds, and organizations working to help the homeless, there is still a shortage of beds and services to meet the unique needs of individuals from various backgrounds within the homeless population. One such population is homeless lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning/queer (LGBTQ) youth.

Homeless youth are defined as “those between 12 and 24 years of age who have spent at least one night on the streets, in a public place (e.g., parks, under highway overpasses, abandoned buildings), or in a shelter” (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2007; Bender, Thompson, McManus, Lantry, & Flynn, 2007, p. 25). Nearly half (46%) of all homeless persons throughout the state of Minnesota are under the age of 22 (Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2012). In 2012, 1,151 homeless youth throughout Minnesota identified as being on their own, without their parents (Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, 2012). According to information from the Tri-Annual Homelessness Survey conducted in the state of Minnesota, there were 718 homeless youth and young adults in the seven-county metro area of the Twin Cities in 2012 (Wilder Research, 2013). Youth of minority sexual orientations and genders are consistently overrepresented in homeless populations nationwide, with estimates of the percentage of homeless youth identifying as LGBTQ ranging from 17% to 40%, as opposed to 5-10%

of the general population (Wilder Research, 2013; National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2008).

Homeless youth in general face a large number of risk factors and challenges, many of which are exacerbated among the LGBTQ population. Homeless youth are at increased risk for drug and alcohol abuse, and homeless youth who identify as LGBTQ report abusing substances more frequently than their straight, cisgender (those who self-identify with their assigned biological gender) counterparts (Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler, & Cauce, 2002; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2008). While homeless youth in general are at increased risk for mental health problems, risks for depression, anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, and suicide are significantly higher among homeless LGBTQ youth (Cochran et al., 2002; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2008; Whitbeck, Chen, Hoyt, Tyler & Johnson, 2004).

In addition to internal risk factors for homeless youth, external risk factors such as threats of violence and victimization are found to be higher for homeless LGBTQ youth (Cochran et al., 2002; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2008). LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness have been found to report higher levels of sexual assault, discrimination, harassment, and exclusion from shelters due to their sexual orientation when compared to heterosexual homeless youth (Cochran et al., 2002; Grant, Mottet, & Tanis, 2011; Nolan, 2006; Whitbeck et al., 2004). Some studies suggest that LGBTQ youth homelessness, compounded by a lack of parental connection and support, puts these youth at higher risk for substance abuse, criminal behavior, and survival sex - behaviors that are often linked to higher rates of victimization (Corliss, Goodenow, Nichols, & Austin, 2011). Overrepresentation of LGBTQ youth among the homeless

population indicates a need for culturally sensitive services that not only address the unique needs of LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness, but also provide protective barriers against the increased risks faced by this population (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2008).

It is only within the past decade that this specific client population has become the focus of research; however, homelessness in Minnesota has seen a steady rise for the past twenty years. In 1991, the Wilder Foundation counted 3,079 homeless people across Minnesota and by 2012, this number had increased by about 332% to 10,214 (Wilder Research, 2013). The numbers of homeless youth increased slightly more, rising from 889 to 3,546 between the years 1991 and 2012 – an increase of about 399% (Wilder Research, 2013).

In the state of Minnesota, a mere 90 shelter beds exist for the estimated 1,500 youth, on average, who are on the street each night (Rosario, 2012). Of these shelters, none are specifically designed to meet the needs of LGBTQ youth. One program in the state of Minnesota, Avenues for Homeless Youth's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth Host Home Program (GLBT HHP), aims to reduce homelessness, meet basic needs, foster connections, and build community for GLBT youth experiencing homelessness. This study will examine how this program in particular impacts the lives of its participants and helps homeless youth achieve stability, independence, and sustainability, while simultaneously fostering a sense of community and building meaningful connections between youth and the compassionate adults who take them in.

Literature Review

Youth Homelessness at a Glance

Homeless youth, sometimes labeled as “unaccompanied” youth, are defined on the national level as individuals under the age of 18 who lack any form of parental, foster, or institutional care (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2008). In 2002, it was estimated that over 1.6 million youth in the United States were either homeless or runaway youth (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2008). In Minnesota, Wilder Research Center has defined homeless youth as homeless individuals up to age 21 who are on their own. Most recent data from Wilder Research provided a conservative estimate that about 718 youth (ages 21 and under) are experiencing homelessness throughout the state of Minnesota on any given night (Wilder Research, 2013). There is a potential for under-representation in the data provided by Wilder, as it is often difficult to locate all individuals experiencing homelessness at any given time in order to provide an accurate estimate. Statewide, 14.9% of all homeless youth identified themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or unsure of their sexual orientation (Wilder Research, 2013). Additionally, 1.8% of these youth identified as transgender (Wilder Research, 2013).

Causes of LGBTQ Youth Homelessness

In cities across the country, homeless youth disproportionately have LGBTQ identities (Corliss et al., 2011; Cochran et al., 2002; Wilder Research, 2013). A conservative estimate provided by the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2008) suggests that 20% of homeless youth identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning (LGBTQ), compared to approximately ten percent of the general youth population. While research regarding the causes of LGBTQ homelessness has found

many similar causes to that of the general population of individuals experiencing homelessness, some causes are particularly more prevalent among the LGBTQ youth population.

Youth who become homeless after being forced out of their home by their parents or guardians - sometimes referred to as “throwaway” youth - are significantly more likely to come from the LGBTQ population (Corliss et al., 2011). One study of homeless youth across eight Midwestern cities found that LGBTQ youth were five times more likely to have been forced out of their homes by their parents because of conflict over their sexual orientation (Whitbeck et al., 2004). A 2011 study from Massachusetts corroborated this finding, with 73% of LGBTQ homeless youth reporting a conflict with parents being one of the main reasons for their homelessness (Corliss et al., 2011).

LGBTQ youth are also more likely to run away from home to escape family conflict, such as parental or caretaker abuse or drug or alcohol problems. One study of 156 sexual minority teens (both homeless and housed) found that 62.2% of these youth reported sexual abuse during childhood (Rosario, Scrimshaw, & Hunter, 2011). Gay, bisexual, and transgender homeless youths were also more likely to report leaving home as a means to escape the threat of physical violence (Cochran et al., 2002). An eight-city survey of homeless youth found that 75% of lesbian, gay, and bisexual homeless youth reported severe drug or alcohol problems within their families, compared to 63% of heterosexual homeless youth (Van Leeuwen, Boyle, Salomonsen-Sautel, Baker, Garcia, Hoffman, & Hopfer, 2006).

Risk Factors for Homeless LGBTQ Youth

Homeless youth across the board face a much higher risk for various mental, physical, and emotional health challenges than their non-homeless counterparts (Corliss, et al., 2011). Approximately 38% of homeless youth abuse alcohol, and 26% abuse other drugs (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). LGBTQ homeless youth, however, abuse more substances more frequently than their straight, cisgender counterparts (Cochran, Stewart, Ginzler, & Cauce, 2002). LGBTQ youth in general, whether or not they are homeless, are already at a higher risk for experiencing mental health problems, suicide, substance abuse, and victimization (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2008). Risks of depression, anxiety and posttraumatic stress disorder are drastically increased in the homeless LGBTQ population (Cochran et al., 2002). One study showed that more than half (57.1%) of homeless sexual minority adolescents had attempted suicide, compared with 33.7% of the heterosexual homeless youth population (Whitbeck et al., 2004).

Homeless LGBTQ youth are at an increased risk of being physically assaulted or sexually victimized (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2008; Nolan, 2006). One study found that 58% of LGBTQ youth reported being sexually victimized, compared to 33% of heterosexual homeless youth (Whitbeck et al., 2004). In comparison to their cisgender, heterosexual counterparts on the street, LGBTQ youth are more likely to experience discrimination and to be the victim of hate crimes (Cochran et al., 2002). Transgender and gender non-conforming individuals are also at increased risk for homelessness and victimization while homeless. A national survey distributed among transgender and gender non-conforming adults throughout the United States found that

19% of participants experienced homelessness at some point in their lives due to their sexual identity. Of those who sought shelter, 55% had been harassed by shelter staff, 29% had been turned away from shelters due to their gender identity, and 22% reported being sexually assaulted by residents or staff of a shelter (Grant et al., 2011). Additionally, when this population faces sexual victimization, it tends to be more severe. In one study, LGBTQ homeless youth faced sexual abuse from an average of 7.4 more perpetrators than other homeless youths (Cochran et al., 2002). Some of this increased risk may stem from the fact that LGBTQ youth are more likely to face homelessness alone, without the support of parents or other family members (Corliss, Goodenow, Nichols, & Austin, 2011). Lack of parental supervision and support poses a great threat to the safety and wellness of homeless youth, as it is linked to increased risk of substance abuse, criminal behavior, and survival sex (Corliss et al., 2011).

Protective Factors for LGBTQ Homeless Youth

Faced with homelessness, many young people are required to draw on their own innate strengths and resiliency to survive the immeasurable challenges that accompany day-to-day life while homeless (Bender et al., 2007). Homeless youth interviewed by researchers self-identified their protective factors in three overarching categories: street smarts, internal strengths, and external resources (Bender, Thompson, McManus, Lantry, & Flynn, 2007). Youth defined street smarts as their ability to differentiate trustworthy individuals from untrustworthy individuals, and being very guarded and cautious about forming relationships with other people. Utilizing street smarts protected these youths from victimization, exploitation, and being taken advantage of. Youth also identified internal coping skills such as interpersonal skills, motivation and goal-setting, positive

attitude, and belief in a higher power as protective factors for coping with the challenges faced while homeless. Reliance on peer networks and societal resources were identified as primary external sources of strength (Bender, Thompson, McManus, Lantry, & Flynn, 2007).

While many heterosexual homeless youths remain connected to family and parental support, many LGBTQ youths are cut off from family and unable to return home or reunite with family due to safety concerns (Doty, Willoughby, Lindahl & Malik, 2010). Family members, who are more likely to provide both tangible and emotional support to heterosexual homeless youth than the support provided by peers, are less likely to be supportive of LGBTQ youth (Asakura, 2010; Doty et al., 2010). A study of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals, ages 18-21, examined youth's experiences of support around coping with stressors related to their sexual orientation (Doty et al., 2010). Participants in this study were not exclusively experiencing homelessness, and were recruited through college groups, community organizations, advertisements, and referrals. This study found that LGB youth were significantly more likely to report that friends who also identified as LGBTQ were significantly more likely to be a source of emotional support around their sexuality than family members or heterosexual friends (Doty et al., 2010). The study found that sexual minority youth who were able to receive support around their sexual identity from other sexual minority peers reported significantly lowered emotional distress levels (Doty et al., 2010). This study highlights the importance of community among LGBTQ youth, as LGBTQ-identified peers are cited as significant sources of emotional and mental support for sexual minority youth.

Responses to LGBTQ Youth Homelessness

LGBTQ youth in foster care. A report from the Children's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services states that nearly 400,000 children were estimated to be in foster care as of September 30, 2012 (Child Welfare Information Gateway, 2013). Data from the Children's Bureau AFCARS Report (2013) do not address the sexuality of youth living in foster care, so exact numbers of LGBTQ-identified youth within the foster care system is unknown. It is estimated, however, that around five to ten percent of the foster youth population is LGBTQ-identified, or about 20,000-40,000 youth in foster care (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2008). More research is needed, however, in increasing professional knowledge about LGBTQ youth in foster care and how to best serve their needs, as more and more lesbian and gay women and men are coming out at younger ages (Gallegos, Roller White, Ryan, O'Brien, Pecora, & Thomas, 2011).

A study of foster care youth ages 14-17 in a Michigan-based foster care system found that 5.4% of youth who were interviewed identified as either lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer, whereas 11.5% of the youth reported having questioned their sexual orientation at some point in their lives (Gallegos et al., 2011). Recognizing that LGBTQ youth in foster care are often invisible, Craig-Oldsen, Craig, and Morton (2006) note that preparing foster care parents to deal with the unique needs of LGBTQ youth is essential in ensuring that "invisible" LGBTQ foster youth are having their needs met. Craig-Oldsen et al. (2006) recognize the importance of educating foster parents about increased risks among LGBTQ youth and how to cope with and ameliorate these risks, including

instances of past abuse and the effects of past abuse, risks for mental health conditions and suicide, increased risk-taking behaviors, and increased risk for victimization.

Foster parents should take responsibility for contributing to safety and risk management of foster youth of all backgrounds, and should be prepared and trained to handle the safety and risks relevant to LGBTQ youth. Craig-Oldsen et al. (2006) notes that in order for foster families to provide best outcomes for LGBTQ youth, foster families and foster care organizations should recognize, support, and build on birthparents strengths, model effective parenting skills for birthparents, mentor and teach birthparents about the risks faced by their child, manage personal emotions, maintain healthy boundaries, retain a healthy balance of power and control with the birthparents, and maintain confidentiality of the youth in their care.

In addition to modeling and maintain healthy relationships between youth and birthparents, foster parents also have a responsibility to help LGBTQ youth learn how to access support systems in their communities, such as LGBTQ-friendly and –affirming youth groups, churches, clubs, support groups, and mental health services. By understanding the strengths and needs of foster youth who may someday (or currently) identify as LGBTQ, foster parents can be better prepared to support the safety, well-being, and permanence of all youth, regardless of sexual orientation.

Transitional housing. Evidence suggests that a transitional housing facility is the most effective choice for helping homeless youth integrate successfully into society. One longitudinal study of 106 youth exiting foster care found that youth who utilized transitional housing were better able to find jobs, experienced less unemployment, were less likely to be the victim of a crime, and were less likely to experience repeated

homelessness (Jones, 2011). In addition, less than ten percent of individuals who moved into transitional housing identified issues with substance abuse, compared to over 40% of youth in different living situations (Jones, 2011).

The transitional housing model also provides several potential benefits for LGBTQ youth. From an attachment perspective, a secure base - in which the youth is free to explore and return to, both physically and socially - is particularly important for sexual minority youth. Providing a safe and secure community of sexual minority peers, and occasionally sexual minority staff, LGBTQ youth are more likely to feel emotionally supported than if they were to be housed with heterosexual/cisgendered peers or reunited with non-supportive family members (Doty et al., 2010).

The LGBTQ-targeted transitional housing model has already been implemented successfully in New York. Green Chimney's Children's Services is a federally funded transitional living program that can house up to ten homeless or at-risk LGBTQ youth between the ages of 17 and 21. Youth in this program are housed with two or three roommates in three scattered apartments, located in buildings apart from the program office. Youth in this program are required to pay rent, which is then deposited into individual savings accounts created for each youth and managed by the program in order to help youth save towards future security deposits and rent payments in permanent housing situations. Youth also attend meetings, complete chores, and engage in independent living skills classes. Part of the staff of the Green Chimney's program identify as LGBTQ, and can provide youth in the program with genuine understanding of what it is like to struggle with identity, coming out, and dealing with transphobia and homophobia. Other staff include "straight" identified staff to show these young people

that they are accepted and cared about by more than only LGBTQ adults and peers. In this program, youth experience the LGBTQ culture in an environment that does not simply tolerate their identities, but accepts, affirms, and celebrates these young people's identities.

Life skills groups. Youth who experience homelessness often struggle with the transition to independent living because of a lack of important life skills. A study of 46 youth discharged from Green Chimneys's residential care into independent living programs in New York City found that over 90% of them wished they had learned more about money management before leaving care (Mallon, 1998). Even with some life skills training, the majority of them reported that independent living was much harder than they had anticipated (Mallon, 1998). One of the chief advantages that the transitional housing facility offers is a platform from which to provide organized life skills assessment and training. In a setting such as transitional living, youth are typically expected and often required to meet program expectations of attending groups, using their time constructively in school, work, or volunteer activities, and meeting goals set by youth and their case workers. Implementing independent living skills training into a transitional living program ensures that youth who enter such a program are exposed to life skills training and are therefore more likely to maintain stable housing and employment upon discharge (Jones, 2011). As previously stated, youth exiting foster care had far better luck finding jobs, remaining housed, and avoiding drug abuse if they went to a transitional housing facility, where life skills training was offered (Jones, 2011).

Group work has been found to be one of the most effective and logical ways to administer life skills training. Navigating the formal, ritualistic structure of a group is, in

and of itself, effective practice for the rituals of the adult world. Group work can promote cooperation and community among members, and help youth develop the important skills of learning how to form and maintain social networks (Allen & Williams, 2012).

Networking is one life skills area in which youth in transitional housing lag significantly behind their peers in stable living situations (Jones, 2011). Providing an extra opportunity to practice meeting and interacting with new people is essential in helping youth learn how to build networks of support.

Role modeling is also important for all developing youth, and particularly important to LGBTQ youth who do not have a stable housing situation. One study of 6,653 homeless youth in Massachusetts found that those with LGBTQ identities were three to four times more likely to be separated from their families than their straight counterparts (Corliss et al., 2011). LGBTQ youth are also significantly more likely to have suffered physical abuse at the hands of their parents. Fifty percent of youth discharged from Green Chimney's transitional living program reported physical abuse as the primary reason for leaving home (Nolan, 2006). Additionally, 50% of these same youth reported experiencing verbal and emotional abuse, and 32.5% reported experiencing sexual abuse at the hands of family members and friends of the family (Nolan, 2006). When faced with this lack of appropriate parental role modeling and risk for harm from primary caregivers, a group work facilitator has the opportunity to both be a role model and to present youth with proper role models, with guest speakers and role models in media (Allen & Williams, 2012).

GLBT Host Home Program in Minnesota. Avenues for Homeless Youth is a Minnesota-based organization that provides emergency shelter, short-term housing, and

supportive services for youth experiencing homelessness in the Twin Cities. The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Host Home Program (GLBT HHP) was developed in 1997 at YouthLink in Minnesota and moved to Avenues for Homeless Youth in 2007. The GLBT HHP serves up to ten youth at a time between the ages of 16 and 21 who are queer-identified (those who self-identify as anything within the LGBTQ spectrum of sexual orientation and gender-identity) and experiencing homelessness, with plans to expand services to youth up to age 23. The GLBT HHP is a grassroots organization that is community-based and operated on the services of volunteers. The GLBT HHP does not receive government funding, which means it is not a licensed housing program and is able to quickly adapt and respond to the changing needs of the population served.

The goal of the GLBT HHP is to focus on meeting the basic needs of LGBTQ youth while concurrently fostering connections and building community among LGBTQ youth and stable adults. The GLBT HHP has become a nationally recognized program, with several similar programs being developed across the country in the past 10-15 years. In response to a high volume of contact and questions from organizations nationwide, Avenues' GLBT HHP is currently developing a manual to assist other organizations in the development of similar programs throughout the country.

Youth and volunteer host families alike are required to fill out applications and complete interviews to become involved in the program. Volunteer families are recruited through various marketing efforts by e-mail, flyers, conferences/events, and other media outlets, as well as word-of-mouth. Youth who come to the GLBT HHP are typically referred by a youth-serving organization such as a school, shelter, drop-in center, county program, mental health agency, residential facility, or community-based program. Many

youth in the GLBT HHP continue receiving case management services from the agencies that referred them to the program, and some youth receive case management services from the part-time case manager who works for Avenues for Homeless Youth. Case managers work with the youth throughout their stay in the program and act as a main support for youth in working towards their identified goals. The program manager of the GLBT HHP acts as the main support for the hosts and conducts at least one home visit per month.

Youth who enter the GLBT HHP are allowed to choose the host family they want to stay with, based on a profile created for the host family and a facilitated meeting between the youth and the family. Youth are allowed to request to change host families, but only transfer homes after all efforts have been made to resolve whatever issues may be present in the current home.

Goals of the GLBT HHP are evaluated by looking at four different outcomes. The first goal is to secure and train at least five host homes in the fiscal year. The second goal is to house up to ten youth in host homes at any time. The third outcome goal is to transition at least 75% of youth into their own housing or other stable supportive housing, and to have at least 75% of those youth in continued stable housing at a one-year follow-up. The fourth and final outcome goal of the GLBT HHP is to support the creation of host home programs in other communities throughout the country by providing consultation and sharing of resources.

Conceptual Framework

The purpose of this section is to identify the lens through which this study was conducted. The conceptual framework is the researcher's theoretical view of the variables observed in the study, which influences how the researcher views the research question and data. For this study, the researcher has chosen to view the research question and data through the lens of the strengths perspective, as described by Saleebey, with an additional focus on two areas of the 40 Developmental Assets outlined by Search Institute.

The strengths perspective of social work requires that practitioners recognize the individual capabilities, competencies, talents, motivation, values, and strength of every individual in his or her family or environment, rather than focusing on deficits or weaknesses of the individual (Lerner & Benson, 2003). When working with homeless LGBTQ youth, it is easy to identify the several risk factors and limitations often faced by this population, such as lack of adequate education, lack of employability, increased risk for experiencing a mental health condition, and fractured support systems. The strengths perspective maintains that despite the negative factors that may be present in one's life, each individual possesses innate strengths, resources, and capabilities that will help them overcome the struggles they are faced with, and those strengths must be recognized and valued.

By recognizing individual strengths, interventions employed by mental health professionals must be based on the client's identified goals, and their right to self-determination must be honored. The strengths perspective empowers the individual to draw on his or her strengths and continue to build on those strengths and obtain new resources through his or her interactions with his or her social environment. The struggles

and problems faced by the individual are not seen as weaknesses or flaws within the individual, rather they are seen as the direct or indirect result of interactions between the individual and the social environment.

Dennis Saleebey (1992) notes several key concepts of the strengths perspective. These core themes of the strengths perspective include empowerment, membership, regeneration, synergy, dialogue, and suspension of disbelief (Saleebey, 1992). Of these key concepts, the goals of the GLBT HHP most closely align with fostering the development of empowerment, membership, and synergy among homeless LGBTQ youth and their communities. Saleebey (1992) notes that empowerment is essential for the most vulnerable and excluded populations of people because it helps people discover their own internal power, as well as the power within their families and neighborhoods. Fostering a sense of empowerment in vulnerable populations reignites a sense of democracy and an ability to recognize opportunities to expand their use of resources. By empowering individuals to connect with their communities, individuals can then begin to recognize their own sense of membership within a community – be it a religious, cultural, spiritual, or age-, race-, sexuality-, or gender-related community. A sense of membership in a community helps to thwart feelings of isolation or loneliness. A sense of membership is also valuable in helping individuals recognize how they can contribute their individual strengths to a group. Through these connections with others in their community, individuals are able to build synergy through the development of relationships that bring about new patterns of relating to others, new resources, and opportunities for helping and healing through healthy interpersonal relationships.

Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets also highlight the importance and meaningfulness of the GLBT HHP's stated goals. Through data collected from over four million children and youth from varying backgrounds and circumstances, Search Institute developed a list of 40 Development Assets of healthy adolescent development. The Developmental Assets, as outlined by Search Institute, include both internal and external assets. External Assets include support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time. Internal assets include commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. The Development Assets are an exemplary illustration of strengths that lead to healthy youth development. Data collected by Search Institute has indicated that the more Developmental Assets a young person acquires throughout his or her lifetimes, the stronger his or her chances are of becoming a happy, healthy, and contributing member of the community.

For the purposes of this study and in alliance with the goals of the GLBT HHP, we looked for instances of strength in the forms of support (external asset) and positive identity (internal asset). By Search Institute's definition, support can include family support, positive family communication, other adult relationships, a caring neighborhood, a caring school climate, and parent involvement in schooling. Positive identity includes a sense of personal power, high self-esteem, a sense of purpose, and optimism about one's personal future. Youth who identify more instances of support and positive identity as a result of their time spent in the GLBT HHP are likely to achieve better outcomes over the course of their lifetimes, and are more likely to continue to build on their strengths and capabilities over time in the pursuit of long-term stability and well-being, which is the ultimate goal of the GLBT HHP.

Methods

Research Question

This study attempted to explore the question: How has the GLBT HHP impacted the lives of past participants and helped these once homeless youth achieve stability, independence, and sustainability (the latter being stated goals of the GLBT HHP)? Lastly, I asked about the extent to which it successfully fostered meaningful connections among the youth and the adults who took them in, as stated as a final goal of the program.

Research Design

The original design of this study attempted to utilize a qualitative research method using semi-structured individual interviews with past participants of the GLBT HHP. The interview questions (Appendices B and C) were pre-written and were to be administered by the primary researcher. Due to a lack of interested participants, the design of this research project was re-structured to include an online survey (Appendix D) that included both open-ended questions and Likert-scale ratings. Additionally, the research sample was widened to include volunteers, hosts, advisory board members, employees, trainers, and other community-based professionals who have been affiliated with the GLBT HHP. Participants who completed online surveys were asked if they would be willing to participate in an additional in-person interview with the researcher. Interviews were semi-structured, with seven prepared questions that would allow room for elaboration on previously answered survey questions, as well as any additional follow-up questions deemed appropriate by the primary researcher. Interview questions were informed by literature and by the stated goals of the GLBT HHP. Two participants were interviewed in person. Interviews were scheduled at a confidential place of the participant's choosing

with special attention to ensuring the environment provided privacy and confidentiality of information. The use of individual, in-person interviews allowed the researcher to obtain rich data and to clarify questions or comments with the participants directly.

Sample

The sample for this research study was gathered through a snowball sample and word-of-mouth conducted by the program manager of the GLBT HHP. The program director contacted potential participants by phone, email, social media, and in person utilizing a pre-written script (Appendix F) and disseminated consent forms, research study information, and a link to the online survey provided by the researcher. Interested participants were invited to participate in the research by completing the survey online at their convenience, and were invited to contact the researcher directly with any questions or concerns. The sample of past participants in the GLBT HHP was limited to those who were in the program for a minimum of three months and who are now age 18 or older and who are not currently experiencing homelessness or in crisis (by their own definition). This was done with the goal of minimizing risk for potential research participants who were once participants in the program.

Protection of Human Participants and Confidentiality

Online surveys were anonymous and confidential. The primary researcher was the only person to have access to the data collected through online surveys. Interviews with participants were digitally recorded (voice only) using audio recording software on a personal computer as well as audio recording software on a password-protected mobile phone and later transcribed by the researcher with no identifying information attached to any interview, such as names, locations, birthdates, or names of friends, families, or host

families. Audio recordings and typed transcriptions of interviews were stored on a password-protected external hard drive located in the researcher's home and were accessible by the primary investigator only. All audio recordings on the mobile phone were transferred to the external hard drive and deleted from the mobile phone immediately. Audio recordings were destroyed upon completion of the research, and transcripts and survey data were retained as original data.

A letter of informed consent (Appendix A) was provided for all participants. Participants were invited to contact the researcher with any questions, comments, or concerns. Consent forms for interviews were reviewed in person with each potential interviewee as part of the consent process. Signatures of consent signify that the participant read and understood the purpose of the study, as well as the risks and benefits of participating in the research. Participants were provided with the email address and cell phone number of the researcher, phone number of the research advisor, and phone number of the IRB at the research institution.

Risks and Benefits

Risks involved with participating in this study included the possibility of having an emotional response to sensitive questions related to past experiences with homelessness and working with homeless youth of sexual minority. Participants were asked to consent to participate in the research only if they felt they were ready and willing to discuss their experiences. A list of free counseling and support resources was provided for all participants prior to the interview (Appendix C). Participants were informed that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time, or pass on any interview questions they felt might be upsetting during the interview process. There were

no direct benefits to participants who choose to participate in the survey portion of the research study. Participants who agreed to participate in in-person interviews were compensated with \$10 for their time.

Data Collection Instrument and Process

The researcher developed an original set of survey questions (Appendix C) and interview questions (Appendix B) that include open-ended questions and Likert-scale ratings. The survey and interview questions attempted to glean information regarding the participant's perspective of the experiences and outcomes of participants of the GLBT HHP. Open-ended interview questions and in-person interviews allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions for further information or clarification from the interviewees. The interviews were recorded digitally and later transcribed by the researcher.

Data Analysis Plan

Interviews were conducted both in person and over the phone on an individual basis, audio recorded, and later transcribed. Transcribed interviews were read and re-read by the researcher to find themes through an inductive approach. The researcher looked for themes consistent with the stated goals of the program, as well as other major themes as they presented themselves. After identifying main themes within the interviews, interviews were deductively analyzed and color-coded for instances of each of the two developmental assets being analyzed and instances of strength (as defined by Saleebey) mentioned by interviewees throughout the recordings.

Results

This study explored how the GLBT HHP impacts the lives of participants and helps homeless youth achieve stability, independence, and sustainability while fostering meaningful connections with adults and communities. By using the framework of the strengths perspective and two of the Development Assets from Search Institute, this study identified ways in which the GLBT HHP builds sustainability and resiliency for youth by supporting the growth and development of external sources of support and by helping youth develop a positive identity and self-efficacy. Participants in the research were recruited by the program director of the GLBT HHP, who reached out to potential participants by email, social media, and in person. Twenty-three participants completed the online survey, and two participants were interviewed in person.

The sample of participants who completed the online survey included one past youth participant, one current or past volunteer, one employee, six community-based professionals/advocates, one advisory board member, eleven hosts, one trainer, and one non-specified “other.” Of those who completed individual interviews one was a community-based professional/advocate and one was an employee of the GLBT HHP.

Data were gathered through Qualtrics online survey platform and through transcribed audiotaped interviews. Themes were discovered using both inductive and deductive methods of analysis. Survey data and transcripts were first analyzed inductively and spontaneous themes were noted. After inductive analysis, survey data and transcripts were deductively analyzed for mention of themes related to external sources of support and the development of positive self-identity.

Through inductive analysis of the data, three major topics were identified. These topics include housing, self-determination, and positive relationships/connections with supportive adults. Within the topic of housing, participants discussed 1. The causes of LGBTQ youth homelessness, and 2. How the program provides stable housing for these youth. Within the topic of self-determination, respondents overwhelmingly stressed the importance of youth having autonomy and the power of choice in the form of two themes: 1. Housing and 2. Goals. Two themes emerged within the topic of positive relationships with adults: 1. Relationships with hosts, and 2. Relationships with staff and other service providers. Within both of these themes, sub-themes were identified as 1. The importance of cultural awareness and involvement of adults of color in the program, and 2. The impact of having queer-affirming or queer-identified adults involved in the program. The topics and themes derived inductively can be seen in Figure 1.

A deductive approach was used to search for themes regarding positive self-identify and empowerment, through the lens of the strengths perspective as described by Saleebey (1992). Examples of empowerment include connection with communities (and recognition of their own membership in a community) and self-determination. Prior to conducting a deductive analysis of the data, the theme of empowerment emerged in the inductive analysis within the topics of self-determination and positive relationships. For the purpose of simplifying the results, these themes were merged.

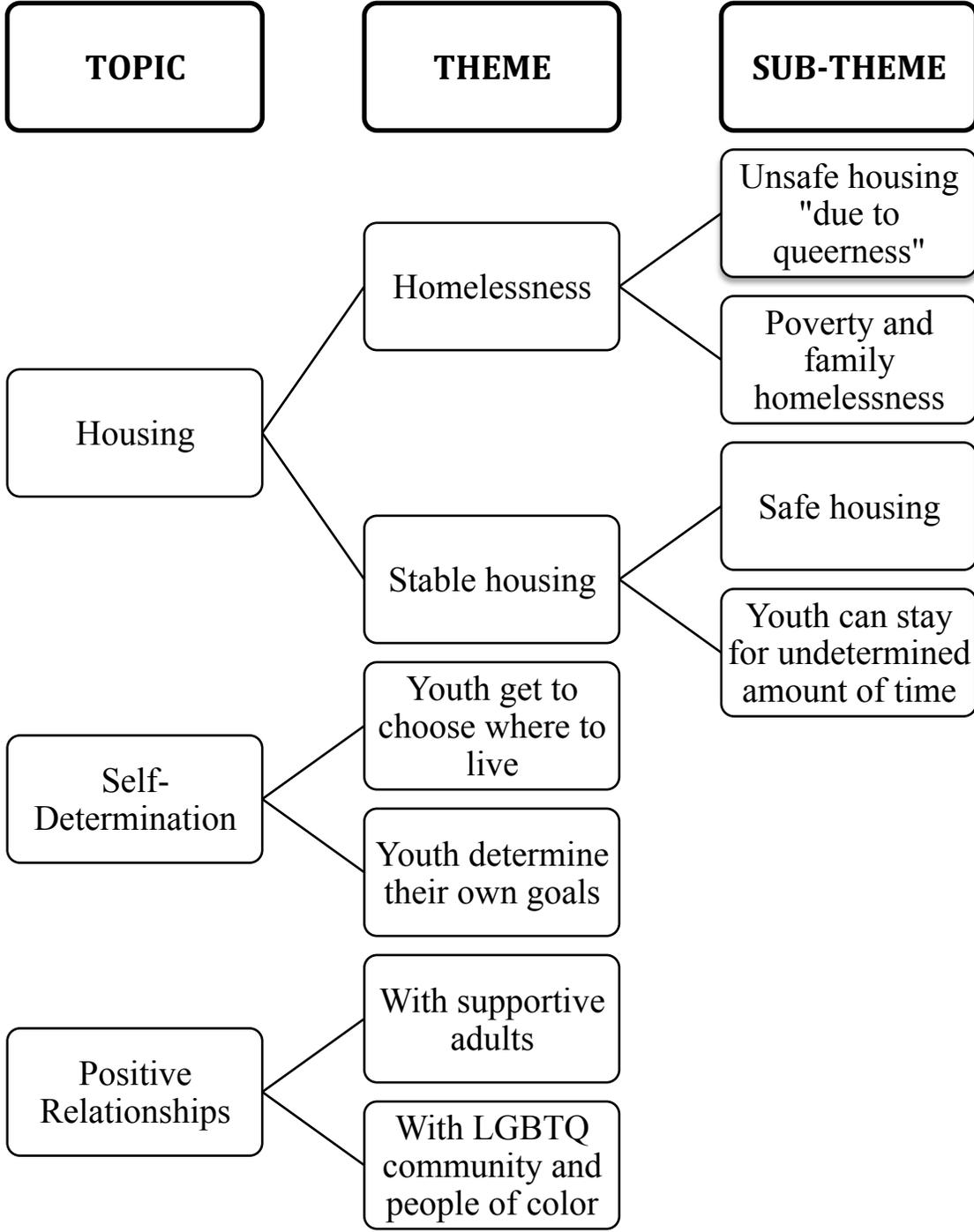


Figure 1: Topics, Themes, and Sub-themes

Housing

Participants were asked to explain the types of circumstances that bring youth to the GLBT HHP. Because the GLBT HHP was specifically created for youth who self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgendered, or questioning, many respondents noted LGBTQ identity as a factor that brings youth to this program specifically. Other themes that appeared regarded the causes of homelessness for LGBTQ youth, which predominately included unsafe housing situations and history of poverty or family homelessness. Respondents were also asked what aspect of the GLBT HHP they believe has the biggest impact on youth, and participants overwhelmingly responded by expressing the importance of stable housing and stability for these youth.

Theme #1: Causes of homelessness. Respondents discussed several causes of homelessness among the youth in the GLBT HHP as reasons youth sought help from the program. The sub-theme of unsafe housing “due to queerness” was more commonly found than the sub-theme of poverty and family homelessness as causes for LGBTQ youth homelessness.

Sub-theme #1: Unsafe housing “due to queerness.” Several factors that contribute to unsafe housing for LGBTQ youth were identified in the data. These factors range from family rejection to exploitation and abuse from people in a youth’s environment that pose a great risk to their health and well-being. One participant succinctly described the reason youth seek help from the GLBT HHP as “homelessness or precarious housing due to queerness.” This quote encompasses several of the responses from other participants who point out that many youth become homeless because they are rejected by family members after disclosing their sexual orientation or

gender identity, are forced out of their homes because of their LGBTQ identity, face irresolvable conflict with guardians due to their LGBTQ identity, or become victims of exploitation and abuse at the hands of others in their environment (including other homeless individuals) due to their LGBTQ identity.

Sub-theme #2: Poverty and Family Homelessness. While many respondents specifically discussed the issue of LGBTQ identity and its relationship to youth homelessness, several others discussed the overarching theme of homelessness due to racial and economic barriers, family housing instability, and aging out of other placements or foster care systems as primary causes of LGBTQ youth homelessness. LGBTQ youth are not always homeless due to family rejection or family conflict, as one respondent describes as “the more easily digestible” or “accepted” narrative of LGBTQ youth homelessness. Many LGBTQ youth who do not experience family rejection or family conflict face homelessness due to a variety of other reasons, including family homelessness, difficulty finding or maintaining independent housing after leaving their family homes at age eighteen, aging out of foster care systems or youth shelters without stable housing to fall back on, and economic and racial barriers in housing and employment. One participant offered their understanding of LGBTQ youth homelessness:

The answer is limitless – many situations are due to historical and current systemic racism and patriarchy, disadvantaging young people of color – especially ciswomen and trans[gender] women. It’s my understanding that frequent reasons [youth come to] the HHP are if full families lose their housing, or young people age out of a living situation at 18.

Another participant further expanded on the importance of recognizing causes of homelessness that do not always include family rejection:

I think in the late 90's most of us who were working on GLBT youth homelessness were really only focusing on that family rejection piece and seeing that as the reason why so many GLBT youth are homeless and overrepresented in the homeless youth population, and I think throughout the history of the GLBT HHP and having had the opportunity to have a lot of long-term connection with the young people who have come through this program, I realize that the reasons are much more complicated. For many of them, especially youth of color who are in the GLBT HHP, oftentimes the reasons have to do with racial justice and economic justice issues. There are so many young people who are in host homes who still have relationships to their families, but their families are also experiencing homelessness or instability or struggling. We don't do a very good job in highlighting those issues, and by "we" I mean more mainstream White GLBT communities, we really only highlight the family rejection piece.

Additionally, respondents noted that looking beyond the "family rejection" narrative is challenging for some people who wish to become hosts "because they want to open their homes and offer love and acceptance to a young person who has been rejected." The perpetuation of the idea that LGBTQ youth homelessness is primarily the result of parental rejection makes it difficult for even youth to identify other very real barriers and injustices that led to their homelessness:

We have created within our community responses, in some ways, a culture wherein young people know that they're going to get more support if they are

homeless because of family rejection. Unintentionally we have created a hierarchy of who deserves our support and who doesn't.

Recognizing the variation in pathways towards homelessness and housing instability among LGBTQ youth is important in increasing the visibility and understanding of these various factors and how they impact a young person facing homelessness.

Theme #2: Access to stable housing. Participants were asked to describe what aspect of the program they believe has the biggest positive impact on the youth who participate in the program. By and large, respondents discussed how meeting youth's basic need for stability and a roof over their head has a huge impact on youth. One past participant who entered the GLBT HHP said:

One of the biggest impacts of my experience was seeing how a health family lived. My life with my family had always been difficult and even somewhat abusive, in non-physical respects. Living in a healthy, stable, encouraging home, especially among queer men, really reshaped my understanding of what a good life can look like.

Additionally, respondents were asked what aspects of the program they believe helps support youth in engaging in fewer risky behaviors, both while in the program and after leaving the program. Respondents spoke about the importance of having stable shelter and food in a safe setting, which eliminates the need for youth to engage in risky behaviors in order to obtain their basic needs. One respondent explained:

Having caring, loving adult relationships and a safe place to stay prevents risky behavior. One example is youth who are engaged in survival sex for places to

stay. If they have a place to stay, they don't need to engage in survival sex for that purpose.

Respondents also discussed how stable and safe housing helps youth work toward their self-determined goals and move forward towards independent living.

Sub-theme #1: Safe housing. When asked to express how strongly they agree with the statement, “This program provides a source of stability for youth participants by providing safe housing and basic needs,” six respondents (27%) indicated that they agreed with the statement, while 16 respondents (73%) indicated that they strongly agreed. No participants indicated that they disagreed or had a neutral stance on the statement.

In order for adults to participate as hosts in the GLBT HHP, prospective volunteers must attend an informational meeting and complete applications, background checks, interviews, home visits, and formal training to prepare them to host LGBTQ youth in their homes. Hosts also participate in monthly community support groups for hosts, monthly home visits, and follow-up trainings throughout the year on topics relevant to LGBTQ youth. The process of recruiting and maintaining host homes for LGBTQ youth ensures that hosts and youth placed in their homes receive ongoing support and training from the agency to maintain safe and supportive housing for all youth in the program. The importance of having a safe place to stay was described in the response from one participant:

[The GLBT HHP] is described as a short term, transitional situation that would give a young person some time to reflect and plan for future living situations. It also gives the stability and support of a safe place to stay while figuring that out

and [making] whatever progress is necessary to move into the next phase of their plan (maybe it's to finish a GED first, or land a job, or whatever else that might be).

Sub-theme #2: Youth can stay for undetermined amount of time. The structure of the GLBT HHP is not designed to impose set limitations on how long youth can stay in a host home. Ultimately, the GLBT HHP works to house up to ten youth at any given time with the goal of helping at least 75% of youth move into their own housing or other supportive housing after leaving the GLBT HHP. The length of time youth spend in the GLBT HHP is negotiated between the youth and their host, and may sometimes even continue after the youth “graduates” from the GLBT HHP. One respondent even pointed out that returning to stay with a host family is an option for some youth who experience unstable housing or difficulty maintaining independence after leaving the program. Based on responses from participants, ample length of time spent in the program is essential in ensuring youth have the chance to find stability, focus on their long-term goals, and regain a sense of hope about their lives and their futures. One past participant stated:

[The GLBT HHP] provides a period of time to help someone get on their feet and practice self-support. They allowed me to stay as long as I needed to feel comfortable in my ability to find a solid home, and conducted check-ins after I had moved into my own apartment.

Another participant explained how providing housing without time limitations allows youth to focus on connecting with resources and working towards goals:

Young people in the program can take the energy, time, and space to focus on stable employment/housing, and connect with resources for housing and other needs, while not worrying about housing. It helps them get ahead.

Without the restriction of a time-limited housing situation, youth are allowed to work at their own pace towards their identified goals, while taking time to stabilize and build their resources – both internal and external.

Self-Determination

Several examples of how the GLBT HHP supports self-determination among youth participants were found in the data. The two major themes of self-determination were youth choosing their hosts and youth determining their goals while in the program.

Theme #1: Youth get to choose where to live. Many respondents discussed the importance of youth getting to choose where they live. The importance of this was highlighted in how the process of choosing a host gives the youth a sense of power and control, unlike the foster care system, in which youth have no sense of power or authority over their housing. Youth are able to read the profiles of potential hosts and choose whom they would like to meet. Once youth meet with potential hosts, they make the decision about who to stay with. One participant described this process:

I think that the best part of the GLBT HHP is the fact that it is the opposite of the foster care system- for which, many youth had very negative experiences.

Essentially I'm talking about the fact that the youth get to pick their hosts, rather than being placed somewhere without any choice in the matter. They get to read "letters to the youth" from hosts that tell about the person, and the youth has the power to choose who they want to meet if they think it might be a fit. Even once

they meet the family they are able to choose to meet a different host if they don't feel it is a fit.

The importance of choosing where to live over being “placed” in a housing situation was evident in the responses of those who spoke to this theme. Having a choice in the matter is important in supporting self-determination.

Theme #2: Youth determine their own goals. Another dominant theme of self-determination was the fact that youth create their own individualized goals while in the program. Participation in the GLBT HHP requires youth to set goals, which may evolve or change during their time in the program. Allowing youth to determine their own goals ensures that the program focuses on the needs of the youth while empowering them to make decisions about their lives, identifying personalized goals and receiving the necessary support in taking steps towards those goals and navigating any potential barriers or setbacks. Participants spoke of how the power of choice empowers youth in the program. One respondent stated:

The empowerment, I believe, is the biggest positive impact on youth – their ability to make choices for their life situation. They also create their own goals that they'll work on during their time in a host home, again, given the full autonomy to choose what they want their goals to be and what their actions steps toward those goals will be.

Another respondent gave an example of how one youth was able to set goals and achieve them thanks to ample time in a supportive host home:

After being referred to HHP, [one youth] lived with a host for two years and was able to finish school. He later was able to move in with his partner in an

apartment, and went on to complete his bachelor's degree, and has a stable livable wage now. The stability of housing was the way he was able to set goals for himself around finishing school and attending college – and he was able to meet these goals and gain sustainable housing in the long-term.

Ongoing case management and interaction with hosts, counselors, GLBT HHP staff, and other supportive adults throughout the program create the structure and support youth need to work towards their self-identified goals. The value of these positive and supportive relationships with adults, not only in helping youth achieve their goals, but also in providing encouragement, empowerment, mentoring, and accountability for youth is the third major topic found in the data.

Positive Relationships

Throughout the data, the topic of relationships with caring adults in the program was discussed at great length. Respondents discussed how youth in the program benefit from the connections they build with caring adults in the program, including hosts, case workers, staff, counselors, and others in their community. Additionally, respondents discussed how positive relationships with adults who are LGBTQ-identified, as well as adults of color, can play an important role in their time spent in the GLBT HHP.

Theme #1: Relationships with supportive adults. When asked what aspect of the program they believe has the biggest positive impact on youth, many respondents highlighted positive relationships with caring adults as the most impactful aspect of the program. Words used by respondents to describe positive relationships with adults include: healthy, stable, caring, non-intrusive, patient, loving, non-threatening, forgiving, compassionate, lasting/life-long, and mentorship. Based on the responses, it is evident,

that the relationship-building aspect of the program is essential in providing the stability and safety youth need to achieve their goals. Through these positive relationships with supportive adults, respondents indicated that youth are held accountable for meeting their goals, encouraged to take steps towards achieving their goals, introduced to external resources (such as counseling and medical care), and provided with ongoing support and encouragement during their time in the program and even after leaving the program. One respondent equated the lasting bond a youth forms with a stable adult as a strength factor in reducing the recidivism of homelessness because it gives the young person a stable adult to turn to in future times of need. Another respondent echoed this response and shared that a past youth they had hosted returned to live with them after leaving the program when the youth found himself in a tough situation and in need of support and a stable place to stay. Additional respondents spoke of ongoing support from hosts and case workers once youth entered their own housing, providing check-ins and staying in contact. One participant even disclosed that they adopted the youth they hosted, making the youth a permanent member of the family.

As an example of how hosts provided support and encouragement in a non-threatening way, one respondent shared:

My hosts made an effort to understand my issue with addiction, and encouraged me to make a schedule of weekly AA meetings to attend, but didn't push it to a point that I ever felt threatened that I may have been kicked out had I slipped up.

Another respondent talked about how positive relationships with adults help youth plan and work toward their self-determined goals:

My hosts encouraged me to enroll in college, find a stable job, use a washer and dryer, and attempted to teach me how to cook.

Another respondent stated:

It holds them accountable toward completing the goals they have set [...] not forcibly, but with patience and love.

The influence of positive and caring adults in the lives of youth involved in the GLBT HHP is evident among the responses of the respondents in this study. The “outside the system” relationships that youth are able to develop with hosts is a unique relationship not seen in many settings that serve this population, and is clearly an important aspect of the work done in this program.

Theme #2: Relationships with LGBTQ community and people of color.

Respondents discussed themes of the importance of youth connecting with their communities (with both LGBTQ communities and with people of color) and ways in which the program might work to build these relationships and connections between youth of color with people of color (POC) in their communities. Several respondents indicated that connecting with LGBTQ adults seems to be one of the most impactful aspects of the GLBT HHP, as well as providing a way for youth to build external resources within their LGBTQ community. Youth placed in host homes with LGBTQ-identified hosts are undoubtedly exposed to a queer-affirming setting, which one respondent described as “the opportunity to discuss [their LGBTQ-identity] without worry of repercussions.” In other words, youth who can stabilize in queer-affirming homes and be connected to a community of LGBTQ adults who are role models for them are given the opportunity to express and discuss their identities without fear of shame,

rejection, or homophobia. Through affiliation with the program, youth also have the opportunity to connect with other LGBTQ youth. One respondent noted:

The case managers in the program do a wonderful job of meeting regularly with youth, offer them resources, and provide opportunities for engagement with one another. This is one of the great aspects of the program.

Another respondent noted the importance of youth connecting with other youth:

You have the opportunity where another person can connect you to someone who's feeling what you're feeling or has gone through what you're feeling.

And finally, a third participant stated:

You have a home base you can go back to anytime. You'll always be connected. If you're in a good situation, you're going to have a connection with your hosts and with the other people you struggled with as well.

One aspect of the program that respondents felt was lacking and could use more attention, however, is the cultural awareness of hosts working with youth of color and the possibility of a lack of cultural competency or hidden racism/transphobia among hosts. Respondents noted that the majority of hosts within the program are white, while the majority of youth in the program are POC. One respondent stated:

Many queer youth of color (QYOC) have said they would have liked to live with POC.

Another respondent pointed out how matching youth of color with white hosts adds another level of stress to an already stressful situation for many youth entering the program:

There is inherent stress in connecting youth with strangers, especially because many matches involve white hosts and youth of color. While having to negotiate cross-cultural relationships is not necessarily a negative, it can contribute stress in an already stressful situation.

Another respondent discussed the implications of a lack of hosts of color within the program:

[...] I would assume there would be much difficulty for young people of color who end up being matched with white hosts, regardless of the intensity and strength of the pre-match training. I worry that this experience could have a negative impact on young people.

Increasing connections among homeless LGBTQ youth with their peers and with LGBTQ adults, as well as connecting QYOC with other POC (especially hosts who are POC), is an important part of building youth's sense of membership in their communities and therefore increasing a sense of positive-self-identity. Responses from research participants identify the issue of race and racial disparity as something worth addressing within the program.

Positive Self-Identity

Several aspects of the GLBT HHP provide opportunities for youth to develop a positive self-identity, as discussed in previous sections. Access to safe and stable housing in a queer-affirming setting is a solid foundation on which youth can begin to feel empowered and supported. The emphasis on self-determination and allowing youth to make decisions about their lives with the support of caring adults and communities around them continues to build on a youth's positive sense of self and sense of being

cared about and included in a community. One participant broadly stated that the GLBT HHP “empowers [youth] to realize the power they have within themselves and how to use it.” Another respondent described in more detail how the GLBT HHP fosters a sense of positive self-identity by providing a safe place for growth and opportunity:

[Youth get access to] a safe place without consequences [for being LGBTQ].

There is a place they can go that they can feel good about themselves. They have a sense of hope in their life and in their future. They get rid of the doubts and things that would once hold them back, about who they are and who they can become, and they have the opportunity to grow and flourish into who they are.

[...]

When they feel safe enough to talk to you about all their problems and concerns, then you are able to sit down and say, ‘Okay, here are your resources, here are your options to explore’ for getting the youth connected to help [...] Sometimes a kid is hesitant to do some things and look at some things, and [while in the GLBT HHP] they get the opportunity to look at different scenarios [...] They now have options in their life that will enable them to accept themselves and figure out a way they can be happy, and grow, and blossom into a life they want to have.

Responses from participants strongly linked the empowerment connected to self-determination as a factor in building youth’s sense of self-efficacy, motivation, and self-esteem.

Discussion

The purpose of this research study was to increase understanding of Avenues for Homeless Youth's GLBT HHP in terms of how it impacts the lives of its participants and helps homeless youth achieve stability, independence, and sustainability, while fostering meaningful connections among youth and supportive adults and other members of their communities. Participants were asked a variety of multiple choice and open-ended questions, by survey and by interview, which attempted to understand various perceptions and thoughts about how the GLBT HHP impacts homeless LGBTQ youth, and ways in which the GLBT HHP (or similar programs) can continue to meet program goals and improve outcomes for homeless LGBTQ youth.

The research participants represented various roles and levels of participation in the program, including staff, hosts, past participants, community-based professionals, and other volunteers. The variety of participants in this study ensured that various perspectives and opinions were included in the data. The majority of respondents, regardless of their role or level of participation in the program, responded along the same continuum of themes discussed in the results, and with overwhelmingly positive feelings about the program and its outcomes for youth. Themes predominately discussed by the research participants included the impact of access to stable and safe housing, the importance of self-determination and power of choice, and the role of positive relationships with supportive adults. These three major themes found in the data provided compelling evidence supporting the efficacy of these aspects of the GLBT HHP in helping homeless LGBTQ youth achieve a sense of stability that can move them toward their future goals, as well as towards stable housing.

Research suggests that transitional housing is the most effective choice for helping homeless youth achieve stability. The theme of safe and stable housing found in the results of this study support the research that shows that youth who utilize some type of transitional living when experiencing homelessness are more likely to find jobs, less likely to be the victim of a crime, and less likely to experience repeated homelessness (Jones, 2011). Participants in this study highlighted the necessity of having a safe and stable place to stay for youth experiencing homelessness because it gives a young person in crisis a home to come back to at the end of each day. The basic needs of food and shelter are met for the young people so that they can worry less about where their next meal is coming from or where they're going to sleep day-to-day and focus more on regaining an inner sense of stability while working on self-identified goals for their future. A LGBTQ youth who is at risk of being exploited or becoming a victim of violence among the homeless community no longer has to live in "survival mode" for the sake of finding a place to stay. Participants in this study stressed, again and again, that having a safe and stable living arrangement is absolutely essential in getting homeless youth to a place – mentally, physically, and emotionally – where they can begin to think long-term and plan for a stable future from a place of renewed hopefulness and self-esteem. Much of this renewed hopefulness and self-esteem is the result of the GLBT HHP's support of each youth's self-determination.

The strengths perspective described by Saleebey (1992) describes several core themes of individual strength and resiliency. The theme found in data of this study that corresponds most strongly with Saleebey's strength perspective is the theme of self-determination. Many respondents noted how the "power of choice" for young people in

the GLBT HHP is essential in creating a sense of empowerment for the youth participants. Young people who enter the GLBT HHP are given the power to choose who they want to live with, reversing the traditional standard of structured and systemic living arrangements such as foster care and shelters, out of which many youth in the GLBT HHP have recently exited. This aspect of the GLBT HHP immediately creates a sense of internal power for youth by entrusting them to make a major decision for themselves about where to live and whom to live with as they enter the program. Once in the program, youth are then required to create goals for themselves with the support of their case managers and the program manager of the GLBT HHP. These goals are an essential part of the program because they are meant to help the youth achieve independence and stability to move them towards independent living. Because these goals are self-identified and self-directed, the focus remains on what the youth want for themselves and what they need in terms of support for achieving those goals. Allowing young people to make these decisions about their own lives builds internal strength by increasing youth's positive identify because it reinforces a sense of personal power, increases self-esteem, and invites a sense of purpose and optimism about the future, which Search Institute identifies as important for healthy development. Ongoing case management and home visits/meetings with hosts, youth, and the program manager to ensure that youth are identifying goals and working towards them is an excellent example of Search Institute's definition of an external asset because it implements support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of time for young people in the program. Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets identifies these qualities as invaluable in promoting healthy adolescent development.

The fostering of this support and encouragement between young people and their case managers, hosts, and the program manager of the GLBT HHP is an example of how this program encourages and supports positive relationships between youth and caring, supportive adults in their communities. Many respondents in this study expressed the significance of positive relationships between LGBTQ youth and adults and how these relationships help youth achieve stability both while in the program and after they leave the program. The GLBT HHP is unique in that it provides both professional support as well as “outside the system” support for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness. As a community-based program, the hosts who open their homes to young people are not bound by professional or systemic boundaries or rules governing the host-youth relationship, which allows there to be a deeper level of intimacy and bonding between hosts and young people. The supportive relationship provided by a host goes beyond what is typically offered for homeless youth in terms of professional support such as case management or therapy, and the value of this trusting and intimate relationship was described by one participant:

One of the reasons the program started in the first place was to have an opportunity for adults to have a role in the lives of young people that's not institutional, that's more intimate and community-based. Every young person needs to have, I think we all want to have, connections to older adults – whether it's a role model, whether it's to see different options. I notice that there are young people who come through the GLBT HHP who are connected to their case manager, or they're connected to their therapist, or their probation officer, and to family members as well, but what is different about living with hosts and

developing a relationship with the hosts is that unlike the professionals, hosts aren't getting paid to have a professional relationship with that young person. It is intimate, and it isn't structured in this kind of systemic social-worky way, like "Oh we have boundaries and I can't take you into my house and we can't go out to dinner." [...] I think young people also need caring adults who are outside of those systems [...] There's not an expectation that young people and their hosts are going to develop a relationship that's going to last forever or be long-term, but it's pretty awesome when that connection develops – a healthy and trusting relationship. It makes a huge difference to the host and the young people...

Fostering these connections between youth and supportive adults is one way in which the GLBT HHP works to build a sense of membership in a community for LGBTQ youth.

Young people in the program are connected to services and other areas of their communities through the connections and relationships they build with their hosts, case managers, program manager, and other participants and hosts in the GLBT HHP. These ongoing connections and relationships have the power to bring about new patterns of connecting and relating to others, new resources, and opportunities for healing through healthy interpersonal relationships, which Saleebey (1992) identifies as strengths building.

Outlying topics that appeared within the data but which were not included in the results of this research study included discussion about seemingly rare instances where youth have not benefited from the program or have had negative experiences in the program due to a lack of accountability, motivation, or “appreciation” for the hosts and the program requirements. The mention of these cases in the data was rare, but is worth

noting in this discussion. One participant pointed out that youth who enter the program may “have a feeling of entitlement that the host is obligated to provide for them without any investment on their part.” Another respondent noted that the GLBT HHP might not be a good fit for youth who are not in the right place to focus on goals with the intention of working towards independent living:

It might be hard for some youth to push themselves to think longer term in order to gain transitional long-term housing, which is the ultimate goal of the HHP. Since many youth are used to survival-mode thinking or planning, it may be difficult for them to plan for sustainable housing post-HHP.

Another respondent noted:

Creating a safe space has the intention of giving the youth the ability to make better, healthier decisions, but that is not always the case. If a youth is not prepared to deal with the stress of the program, [risky] behaviors may decrease [initially], but then immediately spiral downward after the traditional honeymoon period.

It is important to note ways in which the GLBT HHP model might not be a good fit for some youth or meet all the differing needs of youth who enter the program. The GLBT HHP works to ensure that youth who enter the program are ready to meet program expectations through ongoing support from both the program manager and case managers, but, like any program, there are likely to be instances where a young person is not able to meet program expectations or have their own needs met due to a variety of factors. There is a risk that young people who enter the GLBT HHP may end up leaving the program and returning to homelessness or precarious housing.

It's also worth noting that in addition to expectations of youth, the GLBT HHP has expectations of potential hosts that might make it difficult for some individuals to commit to hosting a homeless youth, which means that the GLBT HHP is not a good fit for some potential hosts as well. The GLBT HHP works to be transparent and honest with potential hosts about what is expected of them as hosts and what they might encounter with youth in the program, and expects hosts to be honest about what they bring to the program in terms of what they can and cannot handle. One participant explained the importance of this transparency and genuineness from hosts:

When a young person is living with you as part of the GLBT HHP, we're not talking about a guest, we're talking about somebody who is going to be with you for a big chunk of time – the average is about a year. You can't operate under that host/guest relationship, because that's not what we're talking about. To get to intimacy, we have to get beyond that to get to honest and authentic relationships, and that's where the messiness comes in. During training we talk about lots of these issues – if there are things that you know are going to be triggers for you, that you won't be able to let go, then we need to know what they are. [...] This isn't a peer relationship and there is a huge power imbalance, so it's really incumbent on the potential hosts to be the one looking at their history and their baggage. It's not an equal relationship, so I don't expect the young people who are in host homes to be the ones checking themselves, I expect hosts to be the ones checking themselves. Adults are often better at talking about checking themselves than actually doing it.

The results of the study suggest that the GLBT HHP works hard to ensure that all who participate in the program, hosts and participants alike, are supported in ways that ensure ongoing support for hosts as they attempt to bring their best selves to the hosting experience in the hopes of promoting positive outcomes for youth.

One theme found in the results of this study that was not addressed in the literature is the implications of racial inequality for QYOC. The literature attempts to generalize research on LGBTQ youth as a whole without identifying the unique and often institutionalized barriers faced by QYOC. Many respondents discussed how the majority of youth who enter the GLBT HHP are QYOC while the majority of hosts in the program are White.

Implications for Social Work

The results of the study suggest that the GLBT HHP effectively supports youth in developing both internal and external assets of strength and support that encourage healthy development and move homeless youth towards sustainable independent living. Results of the study also suggest some ways in which social workers and community organizers can best approach work with this population through the GLBT HHP community-based model.

The ways in which the GLBT HHP model has the biggest impact on youth is through providing safe and stable housing, supporting self-determination among young people, and fostering meaningful connections between youth and their communities. One way in which this program and future programs like it might work to increase their effectiveness is by addressing the racial and economic disparities that affect QYOC experiencing homelessness. Because the majority of youth who enter this program in

particular are youth of color, addressing issues of White privilege and racism among volunteers in a program such as the GLBT HHP is one way of working towards a better understanding of the many-layered stories that bring QYOC to a program such as the GLBT HHP.

The GLBT HHP is a community-based program that relies on volunteer efforts and works outside the foster care system and other government-funded systems. Because it is volunteer-based, the majority of volunteer hosts are White, middle-class individuals and families who are financially stable enough to host a youth without any compensation. Historic and systemic racial disparities in education and employment in the state of Minnesota have resulted in communities of color being more economically impacted than other communities, which results in fewer hosts of color in the GLBT HHP. Developing recruitment strategies that specifically seek out people of color who are willing and financially able to host a youth is one option for decreasing the disparity between QYOC and White host families within the program. Providing financial support for hosts who have less income is another option for creating opportunities for more people of color to become hosts, but therein lies the challenge of creating a system that supports this community-based model without recreating a system not unlike the foster care system. Future programs modeled after the GLBT HHP should continually work to find ways of addressing social justice issues related to racial and economic disparity among the homeless LGBTQ youth population.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

A strength of the research design as an online survey is that participants were able to fill out the survey at any time it was convenient for them, thus increasing the overall

response rate compared to the initial response rate received after invitations for in-person interviews were sent prior to the inclusion of an online survey in the study. Additionally, the online survey format provided complete anonymity for participants who chose not to volunteer for follow-up interviews. Participants were free to skip any questions on the survey that they did not wish to answer. Utilizing an online survey that asked for multiple-choice and short-answer responses ensured that the survey would be brief for participants.

By utilizing individual interviews as a follow-up to the online surveys, the researcher was able to hear first-hand from participants about their experiences and perceptions of how the program impacted youth in both positive and negative ways. Conducting in-person interviews allowed the researcher to ask follow-up questions for clarification in order to gather richer data, and allowed for the interviewee to clarify and ask questions of the researcher for the purposes of providing accurate and informative answers to the interview questions.

A limitation of the initial research design of only conducting individual interviews with past participants of the program was that it was significantly challenging to recruit participants for the study. After two attempts to recruit past participants of the program for interviews, the researcher chose to utilize another method of data collection as well as widen the target sample population. The addition of an online survey and widening of the sample population helped to circumvent the limitation of the original research design. A limitation of the online surveys, however, was that participants were free to skip questions and write as little or as much as they desired, which resulted in some responses

being much shorter or more difficult to interpret, without the option of following up with the participants for clarification.

Suggestions for Future Research

Participants in this study highlighted the potential implications of having a high percentage of QYOC in the program and a low percentage of hosts who are also people of color (POC). Due to the limited response rate from past youth participants in this study, additional research that focuses solely on the perspectives and experiences of QYOC in the GLBT HHP would be necessary in gaining a deeper understanding of the impact of race and ethnic background in the context of a host home program. While the perspectives and opinions of hosts and other involved members of the GLBT HHP are valid and worth noting, it is difficult to ascertain whether these views are truly representative of the experiences and feelings of past and/or current participants within the program.

Conclusion

Homelessness continues to disproportionately affect LGBTQ youth throughout the country and within the state of Minnesota when compared to non-LGBTQ youth. The risks and challenges faced by homelessness youth multiply when a youth identifies as LGBTQ, which indicates a high level of need for supports for this population. This study looked at one program in the state of Minnesota that specifically addresses the needs of LGBTQ youth ages 16-21 who are experiencing homelessness. The purpose of this study was to evaluate ways in which the GLBT HHP of Avenues for Homeless Youth meets the stated goals of the program and impacts the lives of participants by building internal

and external sources of strength and support for LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness.

Overall, the results of this study support the efficacy of the GLBT HHP model of addressing LGBTQ youth homelessness. The GLBT HHP of Avenues for Homeless Youth has acted as a model program for others throughout the country because it is a community-based program that works “outside the system” through the efforts of dedicated volunteers. This program supports LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness by first providing safe and stable housing options that youth can choose from, then supporting youth in creating and working towards self-identified goals with the help of their hosts, professionals in their communities, and the program staff at Avenues for Homeless Youth. This network of support and encouragement built into the program is essential in building connections between youth and supportive and caring adults who can support them in ways that promote self-determination and personal power.

One area in which the GLBT HHP and other programs like it may face difficulty in addressing the needs of LGBTQ youth is within the area of race and racial equality. Due to the community-based foundation of this program, issues of racism and White privilege are important themes to be aware of when the majority of volunteers involved in such a program come from White, middle-income backgrounds and the majority of homeless LGBTQ youth in an urban setting are likely to be youth of color. It is important for programs like the GLBT HHP to work towards finding ways of responding to the needs of queer youth of color and including communities of color in the implementation of the program.

Appendix A

CONSENT FORM
UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS
Outcomes of Participants in a GLBT Host Home Program
IRB Tracking # 670173-1

I am conducting a study about outcomes of the GLBT Host Home Program at Avenues for Homeless Youth. I invite you to participate in this research. You were selected as a possible participant because you are either a past participant, or past or current volunteer, employee, board member, or community-based professional associated with the GLBT Host Home Program. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

This study is being conducted by Megan McTeague, under the guidance of David Roseborough, Ph.D., at the St. Catherine & University of St. Thomas School of Social Work in St. Paul, MN.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to examine how the GLBT Host Home Program impacts the lives of its participants and the extent to which it helps homeless youth achieve stability, independence, and sustainability, while fostering community and meaningful connections among youth and the host families who provide them housing., from the perspective of past participants, host families, and the staff and professionals affiliated with the program. I plan to survey and interview several individuals and ask questions about their experiences with the program and how they feel the program helped or did not help youth achieve stability, independence, sustainability, and connections with their community. Additionally, participants in the research will be asked what suggestions they may have for improving the effectiveness of similar programs modeled after the GLBT Host Home Program.

Procedures:

If you agree to participate in the interview portion of this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

1. Complete a 30-45 minute interview at a location of your choosing about your experiences in the GLBT HHP and your suggestions for future programming.
2. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed by myself.
3. The findings of my research will be presented in my clinical research paper and disseminated during an oral presentation at the University of St. Thomas in May of 2015. While the presentation may include some quotes, your name and any potentially identifying information will not be shared in the paper or presentation.
4. The findings of my project will be published in my clinical research paper. Quotes may be used but will not be linked to your name or identifying information.
5. The findings of my research may be used in future scholarly writing or presentations. Your name and identifying information will not be shared in any such writings or presentations.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

A risk of participating in this study includes the possibility of having an emotional response to sensitive questions about your experiences in the GLBT Host Home Program. Participants are asked to consent to participate in the research if they feel they are ready and willing to discuss

their experiences at this time. A list of free counseling and support resources will be provided for all participants prior to the interview. You may also review the interview questions in advance if you would like to and may choose in advance or during the interview to pass on any questions you'd like to.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept confidential. In any sort of report I publish, I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you in any way, such as names, locations, friends' names, dates, etc. The types of records I will create include audio recordings, and transcripts, stored on a personal, password-protected external hard drive that is kept in my home. Records will also include a copy of this consent form, sign by you, the participant, and kept in a locked file in my home. These records will be accessible by the primary researcher and research advisor only. Consent forms will be retained for a minimum of three years following the completion of this study. All audio recordings will be permanently deleted and destroyed by June 30, 2015. The researcher will retain de-identified transcripts as original data.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Avenues for Homeless Youth or the University of St. Thomas, St. Catherine University, or the School of Social Work. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your data up to one week following your interview. Should you decide to withdraw, data collected about you will not be used. To withdraw your information from this study, please contact the researcher directly by phone or by email. If you decide to participate, you are free to stop at any time. You are also free to skip any questions I may ask during the interview.

Contacts and Questions

My name is Megan McTeague. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at meganmcteague@yahoo.com or 651-208-3803. The research advisor, David Roseborough, can be reached at 651-962-5804. You may also contact the University of St. Thomas Institutional Review Board at 651-962-6038 with any questions or concerns.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age. I consent to an audio recording of my interview with later transcription.

Signature of Study Participant

Date

Print Name of Study Participant

Signature of Researcher

Date

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Past Youth Participants

1. What brought you to this program
 - a. What were some of the benefits of joining this program?
 - i. Would you say any of these benefits were immediate or did they come after you'd been in the program for some time?
 - b. What were the risks and challenges in deciding to come to this program?
2. In your own words, please describe your experience in the program
 - a. What were the highs and lows of being in a host home?
 - b. How long were you in the program/how many host homes did you stay in?
 - c. Did you attend school or work while you were in the HHP?
3. Can you think of some examples of any positive and/or negative impact the program had on you?
 - a. What aspect of the program had the biggest impact on you?
 - b. Do you believe the program helped you make decisions about whether or not to engage in risky behaviors?
 - i. If so, in what ways did this program help you make those decisions?
 - c. What has stayed with you as a result of being part of this program?
4. What is your perspective on how the program provided or did not provide stability and resiliency for you?
 - a. Do you feel that you found role models through this program?
 - b. Did this program help you build external resources – such as connecting you with supportive peers, adults, or programs in your community?
 - c. Do you feel it helped you build skills in living independently?
5. Do you feel that the HHP helped you build stronger connections with people in your community? Why or why not?
 - a. How have these connections benefited you or helped you develop independent living skills?
 - b. Have you experienced homelessness since you left this program?
 - i. In your opinion, do you think that your experience in the program had any impact on your ability to find permanent housing after experiencing homelessness?
6. How do you think this program can help others?
7. If you could recommend anything for future programs like this one to do exactly the same as the GLBT HHP, better than the GLBT HHP, or differently from the GLBT HHP, what would you recommend?

Appendix C

Interview Questions for Volunteers, Board Members, Staff, and other Professionals

1. What is your understanding of what kind of situations bring youth to this program?
2. What is your perception of any positive and/or negative impact the program has on the youth who participate?
 - a. What aspect of the program do you think had the biggest impact on youth?
 - b. Do you believe the program helps youth make decisions about how to take care of themselves, or whether or not to engage in risky behaviors?
 - i. If so, in what ways did this program help them make those decisions?
3. What is your perspective on how the program provided or did not provide stability and resiliency for youth?
 - a. Do you feel that you acted as a role model for youth in this program?
 - b. Do you feel this program helped youth build external resources – such as connecting with supportive peers, adults, or programs in their community?
 - c. Do you feel the program helped youth build skills in living independently?
4. Do you feel that the HHP helped youth build stronger connections with people in their community? Why or why not?
 - a. If it did, how do you think these connections have benefited youth or helped youth develop and maintain independent living skills?
 - b. In your opinion, do you think that youth's experience in the program had any impact on their ability to find permanent housing after experiencing homelessness? If so, in what ways?
5. If you could recommend anything for future programs like this one to do exactly the same as the GLBT HHP, better than the GLBT HHP, or differently from the GLBT HHP, what would you recommend?

Appendix D

Online Survey Questions

Q1 [Consent Form (Appendix A)]

Q2 Statement of Consent: I have read the above information. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I consent to participate in the study. I am at least 18 years of age.

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

If No Is Selected, Then Skip To End of Survey

Q3 How would you describe your involvement in the GLBT Host Home Program?

- Past Youth Participant (1)
- Current or Past Volunteer (2)
- Employee (3)
- Host (12)
- Intern (4)
- Trainer (13)
- GLBT HHP Advisory Board Member (7)
- Community-based professional or advocate (Pastor, Social Worker, Psychologist, Doctor, Caseworker, etc.) (5)
- Other (6)

Answer If How would you describe your involvement in the GLBT Host Home Program? Supportive Professional in the Community (Pastor, Social Worker, Psychologist, Doctor, Caseworker, etc.) Is Selected

Q4 If you indicated your involvement in the GLBT Host Home Program as a "Community-based professional or advocate," please briefly describe your professional or advocate role:

Answer If How would you describe your involvement in the GLBT Host Home Program? Other Is Selected

Q5 If you responded to your involvement in the program with "Other," please describe your role or involvement with the GLBT Host Home Program:

Answer If How would you describe your involvement in the GLBT Host Home Program? Host Family/Host Home Is Selected

Q6 How many youth have you hosted in your time as a volunteer host home?

Q7 What is your understanding of the kinds of situations that bring youth to this program?

Q8 What aspects of the program do you believe have the biggest positive impact on youth?

Q9 Are there any factors of the program that you believe may have a potentially negative impact on youth participating in the program?

Q10 For the following questions, please indicate how strongly you agree with each statement. Follow-up questions may be asked based on your response to each question.

Q11 This program helps youth plan and work toward self-determined goals that support their ability to successfully live independently.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)

Answer If This program helps youth make decisions about how to take care of themselves in order to successf... Strongly Disagree Is Selected Or This program helps youth make decisions about how to take care of themselves in order to successf... Disagree Is Selected

Q12 How might this program work to better help youth plan and work toward self-determined goals that support their ability to successfully live independently?

Answer If This program has helped youth make decisions about how to take care of themselves in order to successfully live independently. Agree Is Selected Or This program has helped youth make decisions about how to take care of themselves in order to successfully live independently. Strongly Agree Is Selected

Q13 Please provide at least one example of how this program helps youth plan and work toward self-determined goals that support their ability to successfully live independently.

Q14 This program supports youth in decreasing their engagement in risky behaviors while they are in the program.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)

Q15 This program supports youth in decreasing their engagement in risky behaviors even after they leave the program.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)

Answer If This program helps youth decrease their engagement in risky behaviors even after they leave the p... Strongly Disagree Is Selected Or This program helps youth decrease their engagement in risky behaviors even after they leave the p... Disagree Is Selected Or This program helps youth by decreasing their engagement in risky behaviors while they are in the... Strongly Disagree Is Selected Or This program helps youth by decreasing their engagement in risky behaviors while they are in the... Disagree Is Selected

Q16 What suggestions, if any, do you have for how this program can support youth in decreasing their engagement in risky behaviors while they are in the program and/or after they leave the program?

Answer If This program helps youth by decreasing their engagement in risky behaviors while they are in the program. Agree Is Selected Or This program helps youth by decreasing their engagement in risky behaviors while they are in the program. Strongly Agree Is Selected Or This program helps youth decrease their engagement in risky behaviors even after they leave the program. Agree Is Selected Or This program helps youth decrease their engagement in risky behaviors even after they leave the program. Strongly Agree Is Selected

Q17 Please provide at least one example of how this program supports youth in engaging in fewer risky behaviors:

Q18 This program provides a source of stability for youth participants by providing safe housing and basic needs.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)

Answer If This program provides a source of stability for youth participants. Strongly Disagree Is Selected Or This program provides a source of stability for youth participants. Disagree Is Selected

Q19 In what way(s) do you think this program could provide more stability for youth participants?

Answer If This program provides a source of stability for youth participants. Agree Is Selected Or This program provides a source of stability for youth participants. Strongly Agree Is Selected

Q20 Please provide at least one example of how this program provides stability for youth:

Q21 This program builds resiliency for youth participants.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)

Answer If This program builds resiliency for youth participants. Strongly Disagree Is Selected Or This program builds resiliency for youth participants. Disagree Is Selected

Q22 Do you have any thoughts on how this program could help to build better resiliency for youth participants?

Answer If This program builds resiliency for youth participants. Agree Is Selected Or This program builds resiliency for youth participants. Strongly Agree Is Selected

Q23 Please provide at least one example of how this program builds resiliency for youth:

Q24 This program helps youth build external resources (e.g. builds connections between youth and their communities, supportive peers, adults, programs in their community, etc).

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)

Answer If This program helps youth build external resources (e.g. connects youth with supportive peers, adults, programs in their community, etc). Strongly Disagree Is Selected Or This program helps youth build external resources (e.g. connects youth with supportive peers, adults, programs in their community, etc). Disagree Is Selected

Q25 Can you think of at least one way in which this program can help youth participants build their network of external resources while they are in the program?

Answer If This program helps youth build external resources (e.g. connects youth with supportive peers, adults, programs in their community, etc). Agree Is Selected Or This program helps youth build external resources (e.g. connects youth with supportive peers, adults, programs in their community, etc). Strongly Agree Is Selected

Q26 Please provide at least one example of how this program helps youth build external resources:

Q27 This program helps youth build skills towards independent living, reducing their risk of future homelessness.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)

Q28 This program helps youth transition into permanent housing after experiencing homelessness.

- Strongly Disagree (1)
- Disagree (2)
- Neither Agree nor Disagree (3)
- Agree (4)
- Strongly Agree (5)

Answer If This program helps youth build skills towards independent living, reducing their risk of future homelessness. Strongly Disagree Is Selected Or This program helps youth build skills towards independent living, reducing their risk of future homelessness. Disagree Is Selected Or This program helps youth transition into permanent housing after experiencing homelessness. Strongly Disagree Is Selected Or This program helps youth transition into permanent housing after experiencing homelessness. Disagree Is Selected

Q29 What is something you think this program should improve on or implement in order to help youth participants lower their risk of re-experiencing homelessness after leaving this program?

Answer If This program helps youth transition into permanent housing after experiencing homelessness. Agree Is Selected Or This program helps youth transition into permanent housing after experiencing homelessness. Strongly Agree Is Selected Or This program helps youth build skills towards independent living, reducing their risk of future homelessness. Agree Is Selected Or This program helps youth build skills towards independent living, reducing their risk of future homelessness. Strongly Agree Is Selected

Q30 Please provide at least one example of how this program helps youth reduce their risk of re-experiencing homelessness:

Q31 If you could recommend anything for future programs like this one to do similarly or differently from the GLBT HHP, what would you recommend?

Q32 Would you like to say anything about the impact your involvement in this program has had on you?

Q33 Would you be willing to participate in a 30-60 minute in-person interview to discuss your experiences with the GLBT Host Home Program in further detail? Interview participants will receive \$10 cash compensation for their time.

- Yes (1)
- Maybe (2)
- No (3)

Answer If Would you be willing to participate in a 30-60 minute in-person interview to discuss your experiences with the GLBT Host Home Program in further detail? Interview participants will receive \$10 cash... Yes Is Selected Or Would you be willing to participate in a 30-60 minute in-person interview to discuss your experiences with the GLBT Host Home Program in further detail? Interview participants will receive \$10 cash... Maybe Is Selected

Q34 Thank you for your interest in participating in an in-person interview! Please provide your information so I can contact you to discuss further and set up a time to meet. Please note that interview spaces are limited. Interviews must be completed by March 20, 2015. Your identifying data and contact information will be kept confidential.

- First Name (1)
- Last Name (2)
- E-mail Address (3)
- Phone Number (4)
- Is there a day/time that works best for you to meet? (5)

Appendix E

List of Resources for Mental Health Support

Crisis Connection 612-379-6363

Metro area helplines:

Anoka County: 763-755-3801

Carver County: 952-442-7601

Dakota County: 952-891-7171

Hennepin County: 612-348-2233

Ramsey County: 651-774-7000

Scott County: 952-442-7601

Washington County: 651-777-5222

Live Chats: crisischat.org (2pm-2am ET) or imalive.org

<http://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/find-help-support> or 1-800-931-2237

<http://www.selfinjury.com/> or 1-800-DONT-CUT (366-8288)

<http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/> or 1-800-273-TALK (8255)

<http://www.thetrevorproject.org/> (LGBT crisis intervention) or 1-866-488-7386

<http://www.rainn.org/> (Rape, Abuse, & Incest National Network) or 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

In a life-threatening emergency, call 911.

Appendix F

Participant Recruitment Script

Megan McTeague, a graduate student at St. Thomas University, is conducting a research project on the GLBT Host Home Program and needs willing individuals to complete an online survey of multiple choice and short-answer questions. The GLBT Host Home Program is a unique program that serves as an exemplary model for other programs throughout the country, and this study hopes to look at what the program does well and what other programs can learn from it. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes of your time. Surveys need to be completed by March 20. The survey can be accessed at: http://stthomassocialwork.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9AJkudWGARdFtZz. The first page of the survey includes the entire consent form, which will provide more information about the purpose and background of the research.

Thank you in advance for your participation!

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