

The Music Relationships  
of Children Experiencing Homelessness

By

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## ABSTRACT

Over a million children who attend American public schools experience homelessness every year. This study investigates the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness through the lens of the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Children encounter music in a variety of ways and develop their own lexicon of meaning that depicts the relationships they have in, through, and around music. Relationship connections in this study were depicted through a system of relationship networks (Neal & Neal, 2013).

In this study I present and analyze the cases of nine participants who attended an after-school care program at a homeless shelter for families in the southwestern United States. Participants were 8 to 12 years old and represented diverse ethnicities and genders. Data were gathered over a period of two to eight months, depending on participant, via interviews, music and art making, and observations. Research questions in this study included: What are the relationships, as experienced in, through, and around music, in the lives of children experiencing homelessness; and, What do music experiences tell us about the lives of children experiencing homelessness?

Some children experienced fractured music relationships and could not continue to engage with music in comparison to their lives before homelessness. Some children continued to make music regularly before and during their shelter stay. A few children discovered new connections through music interactions at the shelter and hoped to engage with music in new ways in their new homes. Multiple children faced barriers to music making in their respective school music programs. Children preferred to engage in

music consistent with current popular culture, accessed through the radio, smart phone, and computer. Use of hands-on activities that fostered active engagement engendered the most participation and connection to music.

Recommendations include examination of current procedures and practices to ensure alignment with the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Act* federal mandate, development of a supportive environment to foster social and emotional growth, facilitating communication with parents, and the inclusion of music from the child's background in the classroom repertoire. Performance and interactive music opportunities can mitigate the effects of homelessness and restore a sense of dignity, relationship, and autonomy. All stakeholders in the wellbeing of children should include conversations about student experience of homelessness in current dialogue on educational policy and practice.

This dissertation is dedicated to the children whose voices are forgotten, to my mother who always pushes me to achieve, and to my father who brings dignity to those others have ignored.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Meet John Cena<sup>1</sup>, a fourth grade African-American boy who carefully builds towers with blocks and then relishes knocking them down. Sometimes he is angry, ready to fight the world. He says, “I can’t do math. I can’t do it.” After a little encouragement, he decides he can, and all of a sudden, the homework is done. During karaoke time, he wants to be on stage, introduce each act, and help people with their show. At his old school, he played the trumpet in a concert and was nervous until he “loosened his mind.” At his old school, he used to play the drums like his daddy, but he can’t play drums or the trumpet because he doesn’t have access those instruments at his current school. His mom hopes that they can eventually find a district where he can play drums in his high school marching band. John Cena and his sister, Denise, like to watch music videos on YouTube, sometimes together and sometimes on their own. Once, he remembered he liked the song “7 Years” (Sam Smith) when it came up on the karaoke machine. That night, he listened to it over and over and over so he could sing it the next time the music lady brought the karaoke machine to the shelter for families experiencing homelessness.

This study is about children whose favorite song is “7 Years”, who play that song multiple times, and who dream of directing a band playing “7 Years.” It is about a girl who says, “I am a singer,” who creates pictures with a piano in them, and who asks how

<sup>1</sup> John Cena is a figure in World Wide Wrestling and the pseudonym chosen by this participant.

to pronounce c-h-o-r-u-s but cannot join friends in a choir. It is about children who fight over a chance to sing karaoke “by myself,” wanting to be the star, if only for a moment. It is a study about children who play music with their families, who write songs and make beats dreaming that? they can sell them. It is a story of “used to’s.” My brother used to play the trumpet . . . my sister used to play the guitar . . . my friend used to play the clarinet . . . I used to have music class. . .

This is a study of the rich musical lives of children who create using iMaschine, play songs on the keyboard, and shine on stage singing with a karaoke machine. It is a story of the resilience of children who are determined to make hip-hop beats and sing songs and tell the world the story of their lives. It is a study of the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness, what musical experiences mean to them, and how those musical experiences connect them (or not) to others and to worlds real and imagined.

How does homelessness impact the musical growth of the child? What kinds of access to music engagement do children who experience homelessness have? What responsibility do music professionals have to support children who are experiencing homelessness? How can music educators and other adults provide appropriate services to foster musical selves and music growth of children experiencing homelessness? This study aims at discovering the kinds of musical engagement children experiencing homelessness already encounter and the meaning of those musical experiences in the lives of children. Discovering what musical experiences children experiencing homelessness encounter, what musical experiences mean, and what these children desire

may provide a foundation upon which research, intervention, and programming can be built.

### **The problem of homelessness in America.**

Homelessness is a problem in America that requires persistent attention and continued resources and innovation to mitigate the effects on children and youth, as well as adults. The United States Housing and Urban Development office (HUD)<sup>2</sup> defines homelessness in four categories that include: living in a place not appropriate for human habitation, the loss of a temporary living situation, multiple moves in 60 days, and leaving home due to domestic violence.

Some children who attend schools in the United States experience homelessness, a traumatic episode in the life of a child. Students experiencing homelessness are not just the “problem” of teachers in low-income schools; the over 1.5 million children experiencing homelessness belong to all of us. Everyone who lives in a community has a responsibility to the children in the community, whether they live next door or in the “other” part of the city. This study is a step towards understanding our responsibility whether educators, therapists, performers, or other members of the community.

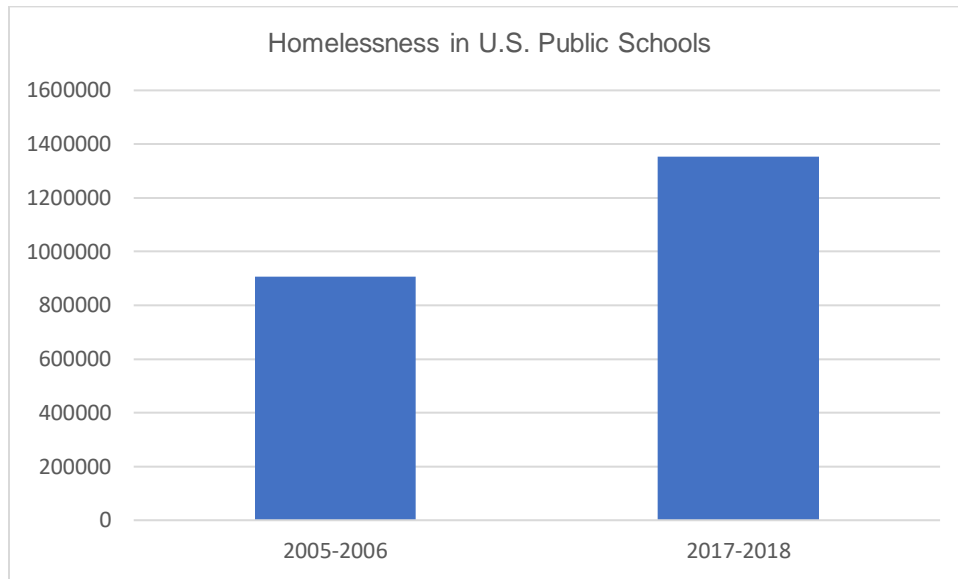
How does homelessness intersect with schooling? Over 56 million children currently attend American public schools, according to the government-funded National Center for Educational Statistics (NCHE).<sup>3</sup> During the school year 2005-2006, approximately 906,680 students experienced homelessness. By 2013-2014, NCES

<sup>2</sup> United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. Accessed June 1, 2019: <https://endhomelessness.org/resource/changes-in-the-hud-definition-of-homeless/>

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Educational Statistics. Accessed June 1, 2019: <https://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=372>



reported that 1,260,721 children experienced homelessness, a 39% increase (Just four years later, the NCHE estimated that during the 2017-2018 school year, 1,354,363 students experienced homelessness.<sup>4</sup> Data accounted for children who lived in shelters, as well as in other temporary residences.



*Figure 1.1.* Estimated number of students who attend U.S. schools that experience homelessness (NCHE, 2008; NCHE, 2015).

While the national trends for homelessness have decreased, the number of children experiencing homelessness in schools has dramatically increased, partially due to the expanded definition of homelessness in education through the *McKinney-Vento Act*. In 1987, federal legislators passed the *Steward B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act*, later renamed the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*, wherein the government categorized a person as having a homeless housing status if the individual

<sup>4</sup> National Center for Homeless Education. Accessed June 1, 2019: <http://profiles.nche.seiservices.com/ConsolidatedStateProfile.aspx>

lacks “a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence” (p. N/A). The definition includes individuals who live in campgrounds, motels, shelters, bus stations, or who share housing with family or friends due to lack of resources (i.e. “doubled-up”). Local education agency (LEA) liaisons report that most children experiencing homelessness are doubled up or living with relatives or friends due to economic insecurity.

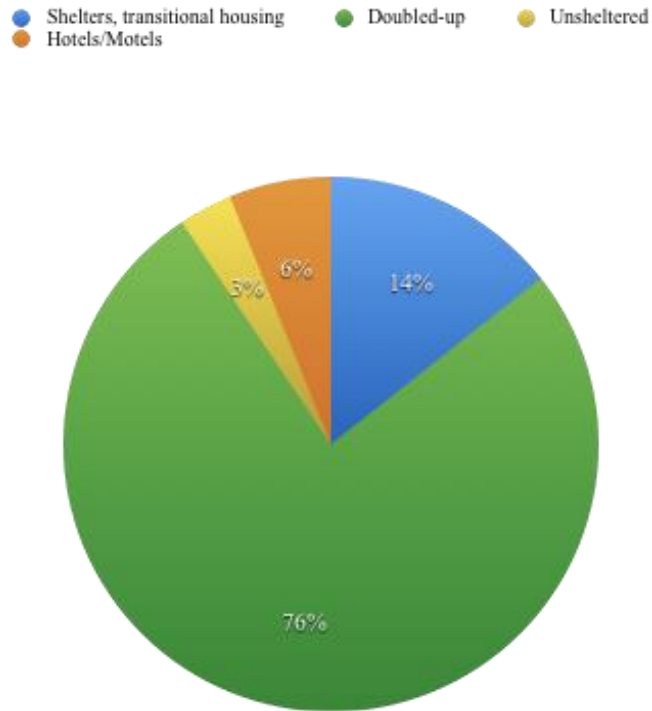


Figure 1.2. Types of housing used by children experiencing homelessness (NCHE, 2015).

Students experiencing homelessness often encounter family challenges that include lack of affordable housing, mental illness, unemployment, lack of social benefits and support, substance abuse, domestic violence, and family configuration; children have no agency in causing or solving these problems (Hope & Young, 1986; Jackson, 2000; Van Ry, 1993). Families who experience homelessness may live in temporary housing that is severely substandard and face challenges to simply survive (Kozol, 1988). The

effects of homelessness on children include increase in health problems, hunger, poor nutrition, psychological problems, delays in development, and being denied access to educational services (Aratani, 2009; Rafferty & Rollins, 1998). Children and families experiencing homelessness report emotions ranging from gratefulness for assistance to profound sorrow over losses. Children experience emotions of powerlessness and fear unknown aspects of their present lives and future plans; they may not trust easily but may still hope for the future and want adults to advocate for them (Walsh, 1992).

In educational contexts, students experiencing homelessness encounter various barriers to education, including lack of coordination between school district and social services, transportation problems, poor transfer of academic and health records, and limited knowledge of benefits, as well as high mobility, large class sizes and failure to meet residency and guardianship requirements (Shane, 1996; Rafferty & Rollins, 1989). In addition to these challenges, students experiencing homelessness face the potential of shame from peers and low expectations from teachers due to societal stereotypes (Shane, 1996).

Administrators, teachers, and local education agency (LEA) liaisons may encounter difficulty in identifying students experiencing homelessness and connecting those students to available resources (Miller, 2011). Teachers can prove instrumental in providing support for students experiencing homelessness (Pickles, 2014), yet teachers may have varied experiences and abilities with respect to working with children who are experiencing homelessness. Those who report greater efficacy and positive attitudes towards students experiencing homelessness often have more training and high quality

contact with students in housing transition (Kim, 2012; Lindley, 1994; Sakaris, 1999; Yaker, 1987).

The musical lives of children are also disrupted due to homelessness, and conversely, musical experiences continue through their lives, despite disruption, in numerous ways. Music engagement can play a role in mitigating the effects of homelessness. Studies exist in the area of music therapy about therapeutic treatment for individuals experiencing homelessness (Fairchild, Thompson, & McFerran, 2016; Staum, 1993; Staum & Brotons, 1995). Researchers have noticed benefits from musical engagement in the lives of youth and adults (Davidson & Bailey, 2005; Woelfer & Lee, 2012). More research is needed to explore the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness, the music experiences they engage in, and the meanings these experiences hold for them. Children experiencing homelessness still face barriers of access to resources and opportunities afforded housed children. As music educators and music therapists seek to develop appropriate interventions and services, more research is needed to examine current bridges and barriers to musical engagement, and fundamentally, to find out about the nature of the musical of children experiencing homelessness and how their musical lives are reflective the relationships in their worlds.

### **Statement of the Problem**

When an episode of homelessness occurs, a child experiences fractures and disruptions in human relationships and experiences that are crucial to their development. Music plays an integral role in the physical, emotional, and social development of children. A child's musical culture develops from the nuclear family unit and expands

through influences in the community, exhibiting distinct ethnic and gender differences in the ways that children interact with music (Campbell, 2010). Stakeholders who desire to support development must connect what children do outside the classroom to objectives inside the classroom for meaningful learning to occur. As Campbell suggests:

The education children receive in school can support some of their “outside” enculturative learning . . . In fact, it must. Schools that divorce themselves from the challenges of the real world of everyday children. . . Bright and well-informed young people are the result of schools that *honor* children’s earlier and concurrent pathways of enculturative knowledge. Their teachers do not assume this knowledge to be inferior but find ways to associate what children know with what they need to know. Intuitive and informal learning beyond the school can be the launch and motivation to a more thorough and lasting understanding of the concepts and literacies that schools profess to teach. (p. 231-232)

All children are biologically designed to be musical, influenced by social and cultural factors (Hargreaves, Miell, and MacDonald, 2002). Parents and family members frame the development of musical identity for children, from the beginning, through songs, lullabies, speech, and other vocal play used to interact with the child. Children engage in music in typical settings at home and at school, and in many other spaces and places (Campbell, 2010). Though children are biologically designed to be musical, social relationships and cultural contexts influence development of the scope of each child’s musical identity (Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002).

Music is part of children’s lives that fosters meaningful connections with others and provides space for self-expression. Children in schools in America experience homelessness at an increasing rate and may encounter fractured relationships to people and opportunities in many contexts, including their music connections. This study aims to examine the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness so that researchers,

educators, therapists, shelter staff, and community members who interact with them may have more information to recognize the value of children's musical experience and include and utilize music to mitigate the effects of homelessness and build bridges to new opportunities.

### **Statement of Purpose and Research Questions**

The purpose of this multiple case study is to explore the musical lives of children and the relationships of children experiencing homelessness as evidenced through their musical lives. This research will initiate dialog and foster understanding to provide a foundation for future strategies to service a vulnerable population. Results from this study will establish grounds for action in which educators become aware of students' needs, therapists craft more effective interventions, and researchers discover new avenues to facilitate access to music opportunities for all children. More specifically, this study addresses the following questions concerning the meaning of the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness.

1. What are the past, present, and imagined future musical lives of children experiencing homelessness?
2. How are their musical lives reflective of their structures of relationships in their lives?
3. What do the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness indicate for practice and policy?

## **Research Design Overview**

This multiple-case study with nine participants was conducted in the after-school care program of a shelter for homeless families in the southwestern United States. Over the course of a year, I served as a volunteer at the shelter and provided optional activities for free time. Data were gathered through interviews of children, third-party interviews with parents, and field observations conducted as a participant-observer. In this study, I aimed to study not only the musical lives of these children, but also how their musical lives were reflective of the relationships in their lives—relationships that may be crucial not only to support during the traumatic episode of homelessness, but also to their development. I chose a theoretical model for this study consistent with these aims.

Urie Bronfenbrenner, a developmental psychologist and leader in the analysis of the development of children, created an evolving bioecological model that allows for analysis of “the phenomenon of continuity and change in the biopsychological characteristics of human beings both as individuals and groups” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005/2001, p. 3). The bioecological model outlines a framework for analysis of the child in his/her natural environment. This theoretical framework considers the development of a child from the perspective of the child and provides a framework for disciplined reflection and analysis of reported interactions and influences. While this study does not focus on the entire development of the child, the child as a musical being develops over time through a variety of interactions. This study provides a unique perspective on the connection and fragmentation of relationships and opportunities encountered by children experiencing homelessness by looking at their musical lives.

Bronfenbrenner defines a system as a particular setting and the interactions that occur in that setting. Use of an interconnected systems approach in this model allows for the researcher to look beyond a single discrete setting to the relationships between settings, cultures, and other influences. Bronfenbrenner (2005/1942) developed a model of interconnected systems, also known as the ecological systems theory (2005/1992, p. 106), to assist researchers with rational, disciplined analysis of children and how they interacted with others and developed in their natural environments. The development of Bronfenbrenner's approach occurred as a reaction against scientific experiments that isolated the child from the context in which he/she normally functioned as well as solely anecdotal analysis. While the researcher using this model does focus on the development of the child, the researcher must also account for influences from both a single immediate setting as well as increasingly broader contexts or settings that may guide child behavior and subsequent development.

The ecological environment is conceived as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls. At the innermost level is the immediate setting containing the developing person. This can be the home, the classroom, or as often happens for research purposes – the laboratory or the testing room.

(Bronfenbrenner, 2005/1942, p. 3)

In this study, children's center setting, the home, has been disrupted, and yet networks of relationships persist, though with other fractures and disruptions.

Bronfenbrenner's model serves as a tool for analyzing children's musical lives and the relationships their musical lives make evident.



## **Assumptions**

The research in this study is based on numerous assumptions and beliefs about music, children, and homelessness. First, homelessness in America is a problem that needs to be discussed in communities and schools, as evidenced by the significant increase in episodes of homelessness in the last ten years. Second, children in America experience homelessness at an alarming rate. Current numbers only indicate children identified by shelter, school, and community service providers. Children (and their families) not included in statistics may not realize they are “homeless,” be unaware of available resources, or may feel apprehensive about accessing provided services. Third, children have no agency in their housing status; they should not have to bear the responsibility to provide for themselves. Fourth, homelessness is a traumatic experience that can disrupt personal relationships, including music connections. The literature on homelessness consistently depicts the negative social and emotional effects following the experience of homelessness. Fifth, children can demonstrate resilience and preserve music connections throughout the homeless episode if they maintain consistent music relationships throughout the experience.

Sixth, children are musical beings, and most want to participate in music activities (e.g. singing, dancing, playing instruments, etc.) if provided with engaging opportunities. Seventh, parents want the best for their children, including parents of children experiencing homelessness.

## **Rationale and Significance**

Children experiencing homelessness have musical lives that require further exploration in order for educators, therapists, social workers, policy makers, and others to gain appropriate understanding of this fragile student population. Previous researchers who have examined music, children, and homelessness have focused largely on the prospect of the use of music for music therapy interventions, only casually mentioning music in the lives of participants outside of the therapy setting. Yet, children experiencing homelessness attend school and interact with adults at home, in the classroom, and in the community, in ways that form their music identities. Researchers and educators need to gain more understanding of the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness in order to more effectively design resources and provide support and/or interventions.

In one of the most substantial studies of the musical lives of children, Campbell (2010) used Merriam's Functions of Music to analyze and describe the children's musical lives, concluding that music teachers need to account for music making practices outside of the music classroom. I considered using Merriam's model in this study but decided against it.

For example, at the beginning of this chapter, I shared that a child experiencing homelessness in the shelter where this study occurred wanted to play the song "7 Years" by Sam Smith repeatedly. If I analyzed this incident from the perspective of Merriam's ten functions of music, I could categorize engagement with "7 Years" in at least three of the categories (human expression; communication; symbolic representation. However,

Merriam's functions do not facilitate analysis of relationships that may have to do the essence of why this song was chosen, and not another song, and relational connection the child may have to a particular song.

Additionally, Merriam's Functions of Music is an anthropological model that facilitates analysis of a particular cultural group. Children experiencing homelessness are not a distinct cultural group by ethnicity or cultural background, though they do have the experience of homelessness as a commonality. Traumatic circumstances, of one kind or another, have interrupted their "normal lives." Research based in developmental psychology better serves the observation of musical connections (or relationships) that children experiencing homelessness hold on to or dream about. Because this study focused on the relationship between the child, their music, and the meaning of that music, use of Bronfenbrenner's model of *interconnected systems*, or ecological systems theory, most effectively provides for the examination of narratives of children experiencing homelessness and their music relationships. While the single immediate setting of the child is important, the relationships between settings also require consideration. Events in which the individual is not present and in which the child has no direct influence may also affect the immediate setting and the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3).

This study explores the relationships children develop with other individuals and independently through the activities of listening and music making practices or "musicking" (Small, 1998). A mere description of music making activities does not sufficiently address the meaning behind music choices. Rather, the use of the ecological systems theory allows for more complex comparative analysis between settings (e.g.

family, friends, school, shelter, and virtual settings). Analysis of data via systems will allow for discussion across various settings of music in their lives as reported by children experiencing homelessness. Analysis of interconnected systems will also provide a framework to consider data in the context of beliefs, assumptions, and practices.

### **The Researcher**

Children experiencing homelessness are a vulnerable population. I provide more explanation of my role in this study and of the ethical concerns when engaging in research that includes children experiencing homelessness in subsequent chapters. An introduction to my role is appropriate here. Early in my career, I taught private piano lessons for seven years, and prior to engaging in my doctoral studies, I had four years of experience teaching elementary general music classes for ages kindergarten to fifth grade. I have an extensive background in Kodály pedagogy that included teaching in a Kodály Certification Program. I have also completed one level of the Orff-Schulwerk approach and World Drumming. During my Following my graduate coursework, I taught at a Title I school in a low-income community for three years. In 2013, I volunteered at Hope Corporate, a shelter for families experiencing homelessness, to interact with children from diverse backgrounds in a different context. My previous volunteer work at Hope Corporate, helped facilitate research access to children who resided at this facility. I returned to complete field work in 2016-2017.

### **Definitions**

I provide several definitions here to facilitate reading of chapter 2 and to reiterate definitions essential to the understanding of homelessness. Further definitions specific to Bronfenbrenner's model are provided in chapter 3.

*Homelessness*-The experience of living without an adequate place to sleep at night.

*Highly Mobile*-A student who changes schools multiple times in a given year.

Researchers often use the acronym HHM in reference to homelessness and highly mobile students.

*S-Count*-A government procedure to attempt to count all of the individuals experiencing homelessness on a single night, often occurring in January.

*PIT Count Estimate*-A government procedure to attempt to count all of the individuals experiencing homelessness at a particular “Point in Time” in January; the updated process of the S-Count.

*Shelter*-A physical place that supplies an adequate place to sleep often organized by a non-profit or government organization that may provide access to emergency housing, transitional housing, permanent housing, and support services (e.g. programs, job training, social worker, child care, etc.).

*Emergency housing*-A place to live on a short-term basis that may require sharing communal space.

*Transitional housing*-A place to live from a few months to two or three years that has more privacy.

*Stakeholders*-All individuals who either are influenced by or can influence policies, procedures, and practices regarding homelessness.

*Ecological systems theory (EST)*-A theoretical framework designed by Urie Bronfenbrenner to conduct research on child development from the perspective of the child in their natural environment.

*Setting*-In reference to the EST framework, a setting is a place, such as the home or school, in which interactions occur between the developing person and others. In the EST framework, settings are depicted through use of concentric circles nested within one another. In reference to the networked model, a setting emerges from the relationships between the developing person and surrounding entities.

*Network*-A social structure in the EST framework that emerges from interactions with others and that may directly or indirectly connect to other networks to form a depiction of the relationships that impact the development of a child.

### **Outline of the Document**

In Chapter 1, I delineated the problem of homelessness and explained the connection between the musical lives and relationships of children. I elucidated a rationale for the study and introduced the theoretical framework, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (EST). Additionally, I disclose known assumptions and personal background that affected this study. I emphasize a few key definitions to provide clarity for the reader. In Chapter 2, I will delve deeper into the problem of family homelessness and previous attempts to address this concern. I report statistics on the issue of homelessness in American schools and delineate both the federal judicial and legislative efforts at institutional reform to mitigate the effects of homelessness for children, focusing specifically on the *McKinney-Vento Act*. Next, I examine findings from various researchers on children's experience of homelessness, challenges and barriers for families experiencing homelessness, and consider various proposed solutions

that may help children and their families. Lastly, I explore relevant research on music and homelessness to propose a rationale for this work.

In Chapter 3, I will delineate the methodological approach to this case study research. I will also explain the EST networked model used to analyze gathered data. Chapter 4 provides background knowledge of the setting for the study, Hope Corporate. I share vignettes of various scenarios composited from field notes and introduce the after-school care program, Kids Club, and the main teacher, Ms. Valerie. In Chapter 5, I share the stories of each child and analyze their music and relationships using the EST framework. Chapter 6 connects findings to relevant literature, challenges current practices, and suggests next steps for both the researcher and education practitioner.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this multiple case study is to explore the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness and the relationships of children experiencing homelessness evidenced through their musical lives. Homelessness is a problem that spans generations and diverse societies. Each generation interacts with individuals experiencing homelessness based on societal beliefs and assumptions that need to be examined to prevent further oppression of those most in need (Beier & Ocobock, 2008).

This chapter provides the relevant literature to support the rationale, methodology, and analysis for this study. First, I document the problem of homelessness in America evidenced through statistical analysis. Second, I articulate various solutions implemented by the federal government both through judicial rulings and legislation, such as the *McKinney-Vento Act*, and critique the implementation of mandates. Lastly, I examine relevant literature about the experience of family homelessness for children, including perspectives, policy solutions, education challenges, and music research.

#### **National Estimates of Homelessness**

In America, during the 1970s an increasing number of individuals experienced homelessness. By the mid-1980s, government officials reported that the characteristics of Americans experiencing homelessness increasingly consisted of the mentally ill, younger

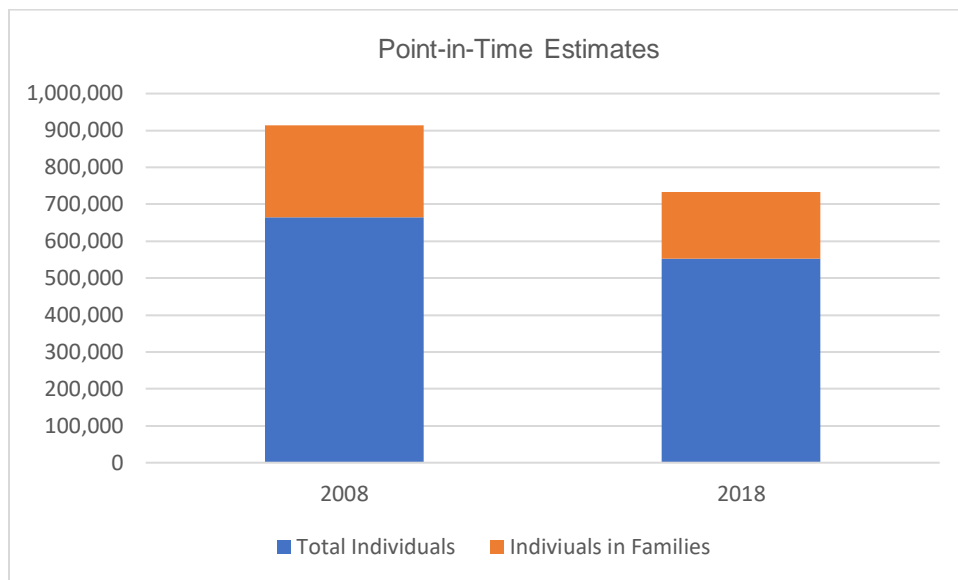


people, minorities, women, and children. At that time, some of the causes for homelessness included an increase in unemployment, lack of mental health support, personal crises, public assistance program reduction, lack of adequate low-income housing, and substance abuse (U.S. Department of Human Resources Accounting Office, 1985, p. 5).

Since that time, government officials and non-governmental organizations have found it difficult to assess how many citizens experience homelessness (U.S. Department of Human Resources Accounting Office, 1986, p. 8), in part due population transience and lack of coordination between federal officials and local service providers (HUD, 2007). Additionally, people experiencing homelessness may attempt to remain invisible to maintain personal safety or for other individual reasons. During the 1980s and 90s, the federal government attempted to track the number of individuals experiencing homelessness through shelter use in major cities and use of S-Counts (physical counts of people who were unsheltered on a single night), but these assessments have proven inadequate to provide a valid estimate of the total number of Americans experiencing homelessness (HUD, 1992/2007),

In 2007, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) submitted its first Annual Homeless Assessment Report to the United States Congress (HUD, 2007). HUD estimated the number of individuals experiencing homelessness via two approaches: point-in-time estimate (PIT) of both sheltered and unsheltered persons and longitudinal estimates of shelter use. During a PIT estimate, government housing agency representatives go to places commonly used by people experiencing homelessness

and physically count the number of sheltered or unsheltered individuals, usually, on a pre-determined night in January. According to HUD, the PIT count estimate for sheltered and unsheltered individuals totaled 664,414 in 2008 and dropped approximately 17% to 552,830 by 2018 (approximately 17%).<sup>5</sup> Persons in families totaled 249,212 in 2007 and dropped approximately 18% to 180,413 by 2018. On the night of the designated PIT estimate in 2018, around 111,592 children experienced homelessness.

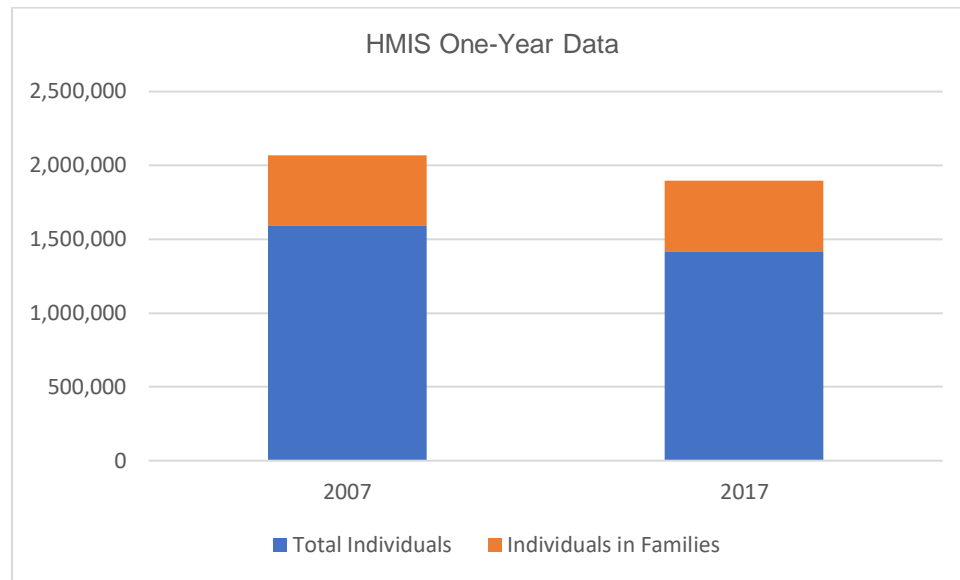


*Figure 2.1.* National Point-in-Time (PIT) estimates of sheltered and unsheltered individuals. (HUD, 2008; HUD 2018a).

The PIT estimate is not the only assessment of homelessness in the U.S., however; HUD officials also gather data through longitudinal shelter counts in which shelter staff track individuals who use emergency or transitional housing throughout an entire year. Data are entered into the federal Homeless Management Information System

<sup>5</sup> United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. Accessed on June 1, 2019: <https://www.hudexchange.info/homelessness-assistance/ahar/#2018-reports>

(HMIS) to track trends in shelter use for a specified time frame.<sup>6</sup> In 2007, approximately 1,593,794 individuals utilized shelter services including 526,724 (33% of total) persons who lived in households with children. By 2017, the number of individuals accessing shelter accommodations dropped to a total of 1,416,908 (11% reduction) comprised of 478,718 (still 33% of total) persons in households with children. While the drop is encouraging, the persistence of the problem of homelessness remains.



*Figure 2.2.* HMIS national data on shelter use within a twelve-month period. (HUD, 2008b; HUD, 2018).

### **The Federal Government Response to Homelessness**

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States government responded to homelessness experienced by American children through a variety of ways. In the 1980s, when the percentage of both individuals and families experiencing homelessness began to

<sup>6</sup> United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. Accessed on June 1, 2019: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/hmis/>

noticeably increase, legislators and legal advisors proposed that the United States needed a holistic federal approach that would facilitate communication and cooperation between multiple agencies to both prevent and mitigate the effects of growing homelessness. In this section, I present the judicial precedent and legislative attempts that preceded the passing of the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistant Act* and subsequent amendments. I also summarize the contents of this federal legislation and provide relevant critiques and analysis.

### **Judicial history of federal actions concerning children and homelessness.**

The judicial history of legislation regarding children and homelessness in the United States is connected to other legislative histories that mandated inclusion of all individuals. As early as 1849, judicial courts addressed questions about racial equality and determined that all children should receive the same education but could be separated as long as access to education remained available to all. For example, in one court case the judge ruled that African-American children could be required to attend different schools than other children and districts did not need to adhere to standards of quality between various schools (*Roberts v. City of Boston*, 1849). In the 1950s, the courts ruled that separation implied inequality and harmed children; segregation due to race implied an unequal status and could have long-term effects on the child (*Oliver L. Brown et.al. v. the Board of Education of Topeka*, 1954)

The court's ruling against separation based on race was later applied to separation due to other issues outside the control of the child; for example, students with special needs still experienced the discrimination of segregation. After further litigation, courts

ruled for the first time that states were required to provide all children access to free education regardless of their mental capacities (*Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, 1971).

In 1982, judges ruled that schools could not discriminate based on residency status; schools could not ask children whose parents were undocumented immigrants about their immigration status (*Plyler v Doe*). More recently in 2000, the National Law Center on Homeless and Poverty opposed separate schools that segregated homeless youth from the housed student population based on the premise that students experiencing homelessness should receive the same education as housed students without the stigmatization of segregation.

### **Legislative history of the federal actions concerning children and homelessness.**

One of the earliest examples of federal assistance to children and youth experiencing homelessness occurred in the 1930s when government programs provided benefits to individuals during the Great Depression. Legislators passed the *Federal Transient Relief Act of 1933*, which established a division specifically to assist the transient population within the Federal Transient Relief Administration. Federal administrators also created the Civilian Conservation Corps to provide shelter for over a million youth who were low-income. President Franklin Roosevelt created the National Youth Administration in 1935 to assist low-income youth with procuring employment and to support youth through cash assistance during transition to regular employment.

From the 1930s onward, legislators initiated multiple programs and provided funding to prevent and support youth experiencing housing instability. The Social Security Act of 1935 provided assistance to states after officials noticed an increase in youth running away from home. In order to address environmental and social influences on behavior, legislators passed the *Juvenile Delinquency and Youth Offenses Control Act of 1961*. Over a decade later, congress passed legislation to assist youth experiencing homelessness through the *Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) of 1974*. The act authorized the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to provide benefits to youth experiencing homelessness through street outreach, temporary shelters, and transitional housing. The act also required states to decriminalize homelessness and facilitated a protocol for data collection about youth experiencing homelessness.

During the early 1980s, local community leaders were held responsible for serving the growing population of adults and families experiencing homelessness,<sup>7</sup> which had increased to over two million Americans. The significant increase in both individuals and families experiencing homelessness motivated the Reagan Administration to develop a task force on homelessness in 1983 (Perl, et al., 2009). The National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH Fact Sheet #18, 2006) reported that the task force assisted local officials with the procurement of federal property for use in assisting Americans experiencing homelessness but did not develop or administer any additional programs or policies.

<sup>7</sup> Heritage website. Accessed on June 2, 2018:  
<http://www.heritage.org/research/reports/1985/05/a-strategy-for-helping-americas-homeless>

Meanwhile, congressional leaders sponsored numerous initiatives in response to the growing problem of homelessness. Various congressional initiatives imbedded in social security legislation and Department of Defense legislation received approval to move forward. Below I provide examples found in the Library of Congress (<https://www.congress.gov>) that outline actions taken to sponsor legislation to provide benefits and initiate programs to prevent, mitigate, and resolve the experience of homelessness. While not all initiatives became laws, congressional leaders continued to introduce legislation until a comprehensive approach finally passed all branches of government.

### **The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**

#### ***Origins of the McKinney-Vento Act.***

In the mid-1980s, lawmakers determined that the government could not delay legislation to mitigate housing challenges faced by families, indicating inadequate salaries of single mothers and shortage of affordable housing as some of the causes of homelessness (Kubala, 2014). During this time, adults and families with children in need of affordable housing either sought refuge with relatives or friends or lived in motels, cars, or shelters. Lawmakers enacted a bill to mitigate effects of homelessness by passing the *Urgent Relief for the Homeless Act* to provide emergency relief (i.e. shelter, food, mobile health care, transitional housing) (NCH Fact Sheet #18, 2006 and congressional record). This legislation was an attempt to provide affordable housing for adults experiencing homelessness and to supply school districts with funds to provide needed support for children experiencing homelessness and their families. In particular,

lawmakers and other administration officials promoted more effective coordination between various stakeholders such as schools, state representatives, and federal agencies for the prevention and mitigation of the effects of homelessness in the lives of American children.

The federal government enacted portions of the *Homeless Persons Survival Act* (1986), such as the *Homeless Eligibility Clarification Act* (1986) which removed the requirement to provide a permanent address for individuals experiencing homelessness in order to access various government assistance programs (NCHE Fact Sheet #18, 2006). Congress also passed the *Homeless Housing Act* (1986) that created various programs administered by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to assist with emergency and transitional housing.

Title I of the proposed *Homeless Persons' Survival Act* (1987) became the *Urgent Relief for the Homeless Act* that President Reagan signed into law on July 22, 1987, renaming it the *Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act* (1987) after the death of the primary Republican sponsor, Representative Stewart B. McKinney. In the year 2000, following the death of one of the original Democratic sponsors Bruce Vento, President William Clinton retitled the act the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act* (1987). Hereafter, I will refer to the act as the *McKinney-Vento Act* for the sake of brevity.

Maria Foscarinis, a lawyer and one of the primary architects of this legislation, subsequently founded the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty<sup>8</sup> which is a 501(c)3 dedicated to preventing and eradicate homelessness. Since 1987, the *McKinney-*

<sup>8</sup> National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. Accessed June 2, 2018: <https://nlchp.org/about/>



*Vento Act* has undergone multiple additions, changes, and amendments. Most changes expanded the services provided and enhanced the original legislation. *The McKinney-Vento Act* integrated 15 programs to assist in the prevention and mitigation of homelessness (NCH Fact Sheet #18, 2006). The Education of Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program (Subtitle VII-B according to the National Center for Homeless Education, the primary program included in the legislation, provided support for the education of children and youth. The EHCY provision mandated infrastructure, such as the creation of positions for state coordinators and local education agency (LEA) homelessness liaisons, the allotment of funds, guidelines for application of funds, and guidelines for implementation of the federal mandate.

Funding for the *McKinney-Vento Act* totaled \$1 billion for 1987-1988, with only \$712 million actually appropriated. Funding levels increased to \$1.49 billion in 1995, and since then have decreased. The U.S. Department of Education (NCH Fact Sheet #10) reported that legislators allocated over \$54 million in federal funds in 2003 to assist youth and children experiencing homelessness. In 2012, the amount grew to over \$65 million. Each state must disperse at least 75% of the amount received by the federal government to the local school districts through the use of competitive applications for sub-grants.

#### ***Content of the McKinney-Vento Act.***

In this section I provide brief overview from the Library of Congress summary of the *McKinney-Vento Act*, with supporting information from a white paper from the National Coalition for the Homeless (Fact Sheet #18, 2006).

In order to appropriately assist students experiencing homelessness, legislators believed that education officials needed to know precisely who was eligible for government services. Over the years, legislative definitions of homelessness have expanded to specify a variety of housing situations that children and youth experiencing homelessness might encounter and that extend past living on the streets or in a shelter. The *McKinney-Vento Act*, as reauthorized in 2009, included portions from the proposed, but not passed, legislation called the *Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transit to Housing (HEARTH) Act (2009)*, which expanded definitions of homelessness to include lack of a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” Below is a lengthy direct quote of the definitions for a “homeless person,” which I include here to illustrate the complexity of the definition problem:

- (a) IN GENERAL. – For purposes of this Act, the term “homeless,” “homeless individual”, and “homeless person” means –
- a. An individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;
  - b. An individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;
  - c. An individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing);
  - d. An individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;
  - e. An individual or family who –
    - i. Will imminently lose their housing, including housing they own, rent, or live in without paying rent, are sharing with others, and rooms in hotels

or motels not paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations as evidenced by –

1. A court order resulting from an eviction action that notifies the individual or family that they must leave within 14 days;
2. The individual or family having a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days; or
3. Credible evidence indicating that the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days, and any oral statement from an individual or family seeking homeless assistance that is found to be credible shall be considered credible evidence for purposes of this clause;

f. Has no subsequent residence identified; and

g. Lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing; and

h. Unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes who—

i. Have experienced a long-term period without living independently in permanent housing,

ii. Have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period, and

iii. Can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment.

(b) Domestic violence and other dangerous or life-threatening conditions.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, the Secretary shall consider to be homeless any individual or family who is fleeing, or is attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions in the individual's or family's current housing situation, including where the health and safety of children are jeopardized, and who have no other residence and lack the resources or support networks to obtain other permanent housing. (United States Department of Education, n.d.)

Given the multiple sections and the language of the definition above, educators and other stakeholders concerned with children experiencing homelessness can hardly be

faulted when confusion occurs. In the next section I summarize other parts, or Titles, of the *McKinney-Vento Act* (Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, 1987).

*Summary of sections in the original legislation from the McKinney-Vento Act of 1987.*

Title I of the *McKinney-Vento Act* reported on findings by Congress, articulated the definitions of homelessness, established an Interagency Council on the Homeless, and articulated need for more coordinated effort in combating homelessness. This section provided funds for people experiencing homelessness with a special emphasis on families, handicapped persons, the elderly, veterans, and Native Americans, and specified funding only for individuals who align with eligibility requirements.

Title II formed the Interagency Council on the Homeless, a part of an independent collection of 15 federal agencies within the Executive Branch, which replaced the Department of Health and Human Services' Federal Task Force on the Homeless. Title II also specified the role and mission of the interagency council, which was suspended three years following the enactment of the *McKinney-Vento Act*.

Title III authorized and funded the Emergency Food and Shelter Program administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. This section directed the program to coordinate with other governmental assistance programs, select recipients of grants, monitor programs, and develop recordkeeping and audit provisions. It also provided FEMA with appropriate guidance to respond to sudden homelessness.

Title IV established and provided procedures for housing programs sponsored by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, outlining steps for submission and

approval of plans that could be submitted by state, city or urban area representatives, and parameters for application and allocation of funding. Title IV also established procedures for supportive and transitional housing and mandated that 50% of program funds allocated for housing of the homeless needed to be used for homeless elderly persons and families experiencing homelessness. In Title IV legislators also guided the rehabilitation of emergency and transitional facilities to assist the homeless.

Title V required federal agencies to make surplus federal property available for local governments and nonprofit agencies to provide assistance to people experiencing homelessness, and established guidelines for a one-year lease and made recommendations for reports.

Title VI authorized programs from the Department of Health and Human Services to provide services through various programs, including a Health Care for the Homeless program, a Community Mental Health Services block grant, and two demonstration programs that supported homeless persons needing assistance with mental health, alcohol, and drug abuse. Title VI also ensured that individuals experiencing homelessness would have access to health services, including in-patient referrals and outreach services.

Title VII focused on education for children and youth experiencing homelessness and authorized four programs in order to eliminate legal and practical barriers to education that could potentially be encountered by individuals experiencing homelessness. The programs included:

- Adult Education for the Homeless Program (Dept. of Ed)
- Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program (Dept. of Ed)

- Job Training for the Homeless Demonstration Program (Dept. of Labor)
- Emergency Community Services Homeless Grant Program (Dept. of Health and Human Services)

Title VII also authorized federal funding for states to implement the *McKinney-Vento Act*, and authorized states to establish a state Office of Coordinator of Education of Homeless Children and Youth to implement the federally required state education plan to assist children experiencing homelessness. Further, Title VII provided guidelines on data gathering and awarded grants for exemplary programs. This section of the *McKinney-Vento Act* legislation outlined job training outcomes expected by federal programs and allocated funding.

Title VIII altered the Food Stamp program to foster more participation by individuals experiencing homelessness and expanded the Temporary Food Assistance Program (Dept. of Agriculture). Title VIII also mandated quarterly assessment of household status and an annual October 1<sup>st</sup> adjustment of standards for eligibility. Title VIII ensured that food stamps benefits must be distributed to homeless and persons under a particular financial benchmark within five days. Title VIII also established the Commodity Corporation to provide flour, cheese, and cornmeal.

Title IX extended the Veterans Job Training Act, including job training application and deadlines for application

*Summary of amendments of the McKinney-Vento Act.*

Federal legislators have amended the *McKinney-Vento Act* several times since the initial passage in 1987. Legislators included provision of more varied services and

changed how funding was allocated in 1988. An amendment in 1990 continued to bolster services and added new programs and initiatives. In regards to education, the 1990 amendment articulated obligations of states and local educational agencies to a greater degree, enhanced the authority of the Education of Homeless Children and Youth program mandated in the *McKinney-Vento Act*, and mandated that states provide grants to local agencies in order to implement the act (NCH, 2006).

The 1990 amendment of *McKinney-Vento Act* specified that schools were required to provide students experiencing homelessness an “equal education” to other students in order to meet standards of the National Education Summit of 1989, convened by President George H.W. Bush and then-Arkansas Governor William J. Clinton (Weber, 2014). Secondly, the 1990 amendment ensured the removal of any barriers to enrollment in public schools (residency, documentation requirements, immunization records, etc.) to education in public school for children experiencing homelessness (National Center for Homeless Education Toolkit). The 1990 amendment also specified that every state needed to appoint a State Coordinator for Homeless Education to promote understanding and ensure compliance with the *McKinney-Vento Act*. Also, for the first time, states could use federal funds allocated by the *McKinney-Vento Act* to provide services specifically to serve the education needs of students experiencing homelessness (after-school programs, tutoring, preschool programs, counseling, social work services, transportation, and referrals for medical and mental health services).

In 1994, according to the NCHE, legislators included the portion of the *McKinney-Vento Act* that applied to children and youth experiencing homelessness in the

*Improving America's Schools Act* (U.S. Department of Education, 1994) a reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (U.S. Department of Education, White Paper).<sup>9</sup> Amendments allowed local educational authorities to use funds with greater flexibility (NCH, 2006). The 1994 amendments also expanded legal protections for the rights of preschoolers to access education and the rights of parents to choose the best school placement for their children.

In the *McKinney-Vento Act of 1994*, congress provided specific directions to local education agencies (LEA) in each state. Instead of utilizing the same approach for all cases, LEA representatives needed to use funds for a variety of services based on individual needs (Weber, 2014). LEA representatives also needed to remove barriers to enrollment and retention of students experiencing homelessness that included: immunization requirements, residency requirements, school records, other documentation, and transportation. Congress did not guarantee \$50 million to implement the *McKinney-Vento Act* but approved authorization of funding according to the needs reported by agency representatives. Local officials still prevented integration of students experiencing homelessness in noncompliance with congressional actions; state authorities often refused to comply because of decreases in funding for *McKinney-Vento Act* initiatives.

By the early 2000s, over a million children and youth had a high likelihood of experiencing homelessness, placing a significant portion of American children at risk for

<sup>9</sup> The Improving America's Schools Act of 1994. Accessed June 2, 2018: <https://www2.ed.gov/offices/OESE/archives/legislation/ESEA/brochure/iasa-bro.html>



educational challenges. Congress reauthorized the Education of Homeless Children and Youth program as part of the *McKinney-Vento Act* embedded in the *No Child Left Behind Act (2002)*. The United States Department of Education states that No Child Left Behind “is the 21<sup>st</sup>-century iteration” of the earlier *Elementary and Secondary Education Act (1965)*.

Amendments in the version of the *McKinney-Vento Act* from NCLB (2001) provided additional support for children experiencing homelessness. Instead of focus on allowing LEAs to receive sub-grants, the State Coordinators oversaw accountability, increases in funding, and flexibility in how funds were used. The act also prevented the segregation of children experiencing homelessness by prohibiting separate schools or programs for students based on their housing status. The NCLB version of the *McKinney-Vento Act* required school districts to provide services regardless of funding received from the federal government.

Both state legislation and judicial proceedings influenced changes in the *McKinney-Vento Act of 2001*. Due to district budget cuts, the District of Columbia withdrew from the program (Weber, 2014). In the resulting judicial debate, *Lampkin v. District of Columbia*, the Supreme Court supported the District Court ruling that the federal government could not penalize states or LEAs for noncompliance with the *McKinney-Vento Act*. Federal government authorities could, however, deny funding to states that did not elect to comply with federal mandates.

Children experiencing homelessness in Chicago filed a lawsuit against various education officials in the state of Illinois and Chicago, *Salazar v. Edward*, claiming that

the policies and resulting practices violated several policies, statues, and due process (Weber, 2014). The young plaintiffs alleged that school officials committed the following violations: refused to allow children experiencing homelessness to enroll in their school of origin, required children experiencing homelessness to provide more transfer documents than needed, refused to supply children experiencing homelessness with transportation to school, ignored parent requests for their children experiencing homelessness, denied access to educational opportunities for weeks, and did not make an effort to proscribe isolation or stigmatization of youth experiencing homelessness.

The court issued a consent decree, requiring officials to create new policies and procedures to support transferring, enrollment, and continuing school attendance. City officials did not abide by the settlement and were assigned an independent monitor in August 1999 who provided reporting, notified families of their rights and strategies to resolve dispute, revised documented policies, ensured designated liaisons in each school, and distributed bus passes for public transportation. Provisions enacted by the monitor informed changes in the *McKinney-Vento Act of 2001*.

The *McKinney-Vento Act in 2001* ensured school choice, supply of transportation, process for resolution of issues, and consequences for violations of compliance of the Act (Weber, 2014). In particular, the Act prohibited segregation of students experiencing homelessness, required transportation to school of origin, school enrollment while paperwork is in process, parent choices, establishment of LEA district liaisons, and requirements for sub-grants. Officials who did not comply with higher expectations suffered legal proceedings to mandate compliance.

*Analysis of the Implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act.*

Within ten years of the initial implementation of the *McKinney-Vento Act*, Anderson, Janger and Panton (1995) researched the degree to which states complied with the federal mandate. Analysts surveyed state coordinators in every state, Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Researchers also completed on-site observation in eight school districts and six state agencies to evaluate state plans for supporting children experiencing homelessness. At the time, the government allocated around \$25 million dollars (FY 1993-4) to support federal, state, and local efforts to according to Subtitle VII-B of the *McKinney-Vento Act*. Researchers determined that more funding was needed to fund mandates.

Analysts noticed multiple instances of noncompliance at the local level. Most states adhered sporadically to policies regarding health and liability for safety of the child. States continued to refuse school admission without proof of immunization and permission to attend from a parent or legal guardian. Anderson, Janger, and Panton (1995) also reported that districts and housing representatives did not always consider the school of origin and academic stability when they made administrative decisions about which school children should attend.

Anderson, Janger, and Panton (1995) also noticed instances of noncompliance in the supply of transportation for students covered by the *McKinney-Vento Act*. School districts provided transportation to the nearest school but not necessarily to the school of origin, especially when the school of origin was located in a different district. School officials often did not permit admission of youth experiencing homelessness due to

liability for transportation. Children and youth experiencing homelessness were also specifically denied access to special programs not part of the regular school experience (gifted program, Head Start, etc.) due to lack of transportation.

Hayes-Whigham (2006) conducted a more recent evaluation of how well the Dallas Independent School District complied with the federal mandates of the *McKinney-Vento Act*. More specifically, the researcher examined established policies and provisions and then proposed future areas for improvement. The researcher also evaluated the impact of implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act on the academic progress of children experiencing homelessness in the urban school setting. Data included interviews, government and local document artifacts, and observations. Hayes-Whigham (2006) conducted formal and informal interviews with individuals who had contact with children experiencing homelessness on a regular basis, including four homeless shelter directors, twelve DISD school administrators, and the DISD Homeless Program Executive Director.

Hayes-Whigham (2006) suggested needed improvement in the areas of personnel, communication, data collecting, and training. With over 5,000 children experiencing homelessness in DISD public schools, the district needed more than two full-time personnel to meet the needs of district students, with a designated person on campus to coordinate meeting the needs of students experiencing homelessness. Hayes-Whigham advised that administration officials should develop a handbook to standardize an appropriate response and develop a database to record benefits and services the student received to facilitate a more efficient continuum of care. Additionally, Hayes-Whigham

recommendation the use of further training for the entire school faculty and staff at one time so that everyone understood their roles and responsibilities and could be educated on *McKinney-Vento Act* mandates

Hayes-Whigham (2006) noted that reliance on parents to self-report their homeless housing status was not a dependable procedure for identification and categorization of students experiencing homelessness. Parents may not share about changes in their private situation due to fear of stigmatization. Additionally, they may not be aware that the definitions of homelessness in the *McKinney-Vento Act* include living in a motel or staying with relatives in addition to living in a car or shelter.

Principals with a large percentage of students experiencing homelessness were better equipped to identify students experiencing homelessness than principals without a large percentage of students experiencing homelessness. Hayes-Whigham (2006) suggested that each school could create a Homeless Advisory Committee (HAC) to more effectively address the academic, social, and emotional needs of students experiencing homelessness.

Cunningham (2013) examined the effectiveness of the implementation of the *McKinney-Vento Act* for children and youth experiencing homelessness. The researcher formulated a historiography and conducted in-depth discussion sessions about the implementation of the *McKinney-Vento Act* with participants (i.e. state officials, LEA Liaison for school district, school principal, and shelter reading program director). The researcher also served as a shelter volunteer and gathered data through observations and informal conversations. In particular, Cunningham considered the implementation of the

*McKinney-Vento Act* at different stages in the academic process (i.e. identification, learning, and support), reviewed the bureaucratic practices, and analyzed government efforts to ensure compliance with federal mandates.

The researcher found that positive efforts towards assisting children experiencing homelessness often originated from an “individual with a strong ethic of care and a sense of moral responsibility” (Cunningham, 2013, p. 147). Without strong ethics, individuals often created barriers for individuals experiencing homelessness. Cunningham noticed an overall lack of resources available to support educational needs. The shelter focused on survival and was chaotic and transitory without a specific place for studying. Shelter staff questioned why it was necessary to be concerned about academic needs for children in their facility because they would move again soon. At the state level, the official reported that her department was not perceived at the same level of importance as other departments. Also, Cunningham noticed a lack of communication and accountability between districts and state administration in support of the *McKinney-Vento Act*.

After the completion of analysis, Cunningham (2013) proposed recommendations: awareness, resources, and compliance. The researcher emphasized that a lack of awareness of the *McKinney-Vento Act* and education of children experiencing homelessness emerged as one of the most consistent themes throughout the study. In the shelter, education often remained a secondary priority to fulfillment of basic needs and services. Cunningham advised that shelters needed to be more aware of their role in supporting academic success through providing a dedicated space for studying, tutoring

and collaborating with the school to develop an individualized academic plan, and partnerships with retiree communities and other similar groups that might volunteer tutoring services.

School and district officials were not always aware of resources and eligible children were denied services by mistake or omission. Cunningham (2013) suggested that schools and districts needed to provide appropriate training on the *McKinney-Vento Act*, the needs of children experiencing homelessness, and indicators of an imminent potential loss of housing. The district LEA could establish a network for communication between teachers, families experiencing homelessness, and available resources, and educate the local community on the needs and opportunities to assist families experiencing homelessness. State level officials could affect dramatic change through renewed focus on issues of child homelessness, including identification, assessment, and provision for the educational needs.

Cunningham (2013) recommended that stakeholders contribute more resources to change assumptions homelessness results from an individual's deficiency, fostering prejudice towards individuals who encounter this traumatic event in their lives. Lastly, the researcher emphasized that stakeholders needed to redesign shelters to create more long-term and transitional housing that provides a more stable environment for families to rebuild their lives: "To put it simply, we must reframe our concept of a shelter to a more long-term, stable, nurturing concept if we are to ever truly make McKinney-Vento the kind of program it claims to be" (Cunningham, 2013, p. 165).

Lastly, Cunningham (2013) recommended that federal government officials implement measures to ensure compliance with the *McKinney-Vento Act* that includes: a simplified the application process for sub-grants, more direct communication and oversight about progress on implementation of the *McKinney-Vento Act*, and use of regional compliance offices and regular audits. Overall, Cunningham (2013) concluded that liaisons and other stakeholders accomplished managerial tasks required by the *McKinney-Vento Act*, however, the researcher noticed the lack of attention to identification of children's needs that still required assistance.

***Critique of the McKinney-Vento Act.***

Biggar (2001) evaluated the *McKinney-Vento Act* using three criteria: effectiveness, equity, and efficiency. The researcher suggested that congress had issued a mandate to states to support the rights of children experiencing homelessness yet refrained from ensuring adequate funding to support benefits and compliance, creating an “unfunded mandate” (Polakow, 1998, p. 12). Federal legislators neglected to appropriately support the mandated programs, while state officials neglected to use the full amount of funding available. Also, state plans did not always fully comply with federal requirements and neglected to sufficiently address academic needs of children experiencing homelessness. Barriers such as requirements for residency, guardianship, and transportation persisted without a strategy to ensure compliance.

Biggar (2001) suggested the *McKinney-Vento Act* is not equitable because the legislation relies on the states to apply for funding to receive monetary assistance. If the state does not apply for the funding, children experiencing homelessness do not receive



needed benefits. Also, states did not always recognize the definitions for “homeless” or “child” or “youth” outlined in the *McKinney-Vento Act*. In other words, although all children have a right to an education, infrastructure did not guarantee the children experiencing homelessness have access to a free education. For example, in New York (at the time of publication), only children who resided in a temporary shelter could receive funding; families living in cars or abandoned buildings were ineligible. Biggar proposed that the federal government withhold other monies from states that chose not to comply with *McKinney-Vento Act* mandates, and that legislators extend *McKinney-Vento Act* protections to children under the age of five in order to provide early intervention for children experiencing homelessness.

Lastly, Biggar (2001) surmised that creation of more low-income affordable housing, though indirect, was the only way that the officials could efficiently use the *McKinney-Vento Act* to help children experiencing homelessness. Also, government needed to develop more jobs that provide a living wage for impoverished parents of children experiencing homelessness. Lastly, families experiencing homelessness needed increased coordinated services to prevent homelessness and help the transition from emergency housing to long-term housing. Biggar (2001) proposed that, “Policymakers must ensure that homeless children can receive the education to which they are entitled. Let us take advantage of children’s desire to learn, create, and be heard to make schools the equalizers that our value system claims them to be” (2001, p. 965).

*Effects of the McKinney-Vento Act on children experiencing homelessness.*

Miller (2012) considered how federal policy, namely the *McKinney-Vento Act*, has influenced the organizational approach on the community, district, and school level. The *McKinney-Vento Act* was authorized again as a part of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act*, Title X Part C (ESEA). The *McKinney-Vento Act* was the first legislation enacted by the federal government that initiated a federal policy on homelessness. Miller (2012) used the Policy Attributes Theory to examine research to determine the efficacy of the act established through specificity, power, authority, consistency, and stability. The researcher posits that both the power and authority of the *McKinney-Vento Act* effectuate the most influence on school districts to support students experiencing homelessness. Increased financial support is necessary to ensure transportation and maintain the power and authority of the mandate. Creative use of current resources, such as legal appropriation of Title 1 funds, and collaboration with community stakeholders can sustain efforts to fulfill the *McKinney-Vento Act* mandates. School and district administrators, in concert with stakeholders, also need to develop systems to ensure that students experiencing homelessness are supported, such as communication of best practices to teachers, use of more practical identification forms, and dissemination of local and national trends concerning homelessness.

Hendricks (2010) evaluated the significance of the *McKinney-Vento Act* on the academic achievement of children experiencing homelessness. The researcher examined the end-of-grade (EOG) reading comprehension and mathematics tests of North Carolina students. Hendricks compared the test scores of students who were housed and students

who experienced homelessness, including the test scores of students who received *McKinney-Vento Act* funding through LEAs and students who did not receive *McKinney-Vento Act* funding but experienced homelessness. The researcher was not able to find any similar studies that empirically analyzed the effectiveness of *McKinney-Vento Act* funding.

According to Hendricks (2010), at that time less than 20% of the LEAs in North Carolina received funding. The researcher set up a quasi-experimental study in which geographic regions in which LEAs did not receive funding functioned as a control group and funded LEAs functioned as an experimental group. The treatment included services provided because of *McKinney-Vento Act* funding. The researcher then compared the EOG test scores from 2005-2007 found in archival records provided by the state educational agency. Students who were housed performed significantly higher on both reading comprehension and mathematics EOG tests in both 2006 and 2007. Hendricks did not find any significant difference between the test scores of students experiencing homelessness who received funding from the *McKinney-Vento Act* and students experiencing homelessness who did not receive funding from the *McKinney-Vento Act*.

The lack of data reported by non-funded LEAs could have contributed to the minimal significant difference in results. Also, the researcher surmised that any efforts made might be insufficient to mediate the negative consequences of experiencing homelessness. For example, students may not have a consistent quiet place to study, may experience food insecurity, and may not receive enough appropriate attention from parents because parents are focused on other matters relative to assisting their family in

crises. Hendricks proposed that classrooms could be more “homeless friendly” (2010, p. 102), and that teachers, school counselors, and social workers could be better equipped to assist these students in need. The researcher recommended various school programs to support students experiencing homelessness, such as the HERO program (Davey et al., 2000) which strives to assist in the development of the social environment and enhance the self-perception of students experiencing homelessness.

Researchers in other studies also considered the level of support and compliance practiced by both district and local school administration. Kubala (2014) found that school administration officials often remained unaware of the *McKinney-Vento Act* and benefits ensured to students experiencing homelessness. While not intentionally neglecting students, administrators often did not provide available support due to lack of personnel or lack of knowledge about rights and services guaranteed to students experiencing homelessness. Educators and school administration officials needed further training to learn more about the definition of a “homeless child” (p. 64), provisions of the *McKinney-Vento Act*, required procedures for enrollment according to district boundaries and residential status, as well as available resources ensured by the *McKinney-Vento Act*.

More recently, Julianelle and Foscarinis (2014) articulated the need for the *McKinney-Vento Act*, summarizing the purpose and overall benefit to students’ education. In particular, the authors focused on the effects of student mobility on education such as: educational needs that are unrecognized and unmet, as well as lack of social connections both in the family and with potential friendships with others at school. Julianelle and Foscarinis suggested that the *McKinney-Vento Act* promotes school stability and ensures

school and social service personnel provide essential services to students experiencing homelessness. Public schooling helps families recover from homelessness because, in addition to education, schools provide free childcare so the parent can work and minimize effects of homelessness on the child through creation of a space that provides emotional stability, self-respect, and hope. The researchers opined that while the *McKinney-Vento Act* makes some progress at assisting children and youth who are homeless, families need society to make available more affordable housing and provide support to resolve family conflict in order to eradicate homelessness.

***Continued barriers to effective implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act.***

Barriers continue to exist in the implementation of the *McKinney-Vento Act* that include: negligence in adherence to the mandates of the *McKinney-Vento Act*, lack of resources, and lack of communication between stakeholders (Kubala, 2014; Tanabe & Mobley, 2011; Tars, 2009). Kubala (2014) suggested that one barrier to the implementation of the *McKinney-Vento Act* arises from “benign neglect” (p. 64), meaning that school administrators unwittingly neglect opportunities to connect children experiencing homelessness with appropriate available resources. Local Education Agency (LEA) liaisons are sometimes unaware that they are the assigned LEA liaison and were not always familiar with the *McKinney-Vento Act* (Windsor & Thompson, 2008). District personnel continue to use outdated procedures that preclude students experiencing homelessness from receiving appropriate support (Kubala, 2014).

Weber (2014) found that principals did not always receive information about the *McKinney-Vento Act* during their initial university certification, and principals reported

that they did not receive information from state officials. While administrators initially ensured students experiencing homelessness received counseling, enrollment in the free breakfast and lunch program, time to procure immunization records, and assistance with medical needs, some administrators reported the lack of availability of services (Weber, 2014). Tars (2009) suggested that states and local school districts request more funding to support implementation of the *McKinney-Vento Act*. States and school districts often struggled to fulfill the *McKinney-Vento Act* mandates due to the lack of personnel resources dedicated to identification, communication, and support between all stakeholders involved.

Weber (2014) reported that principals faced challenges in the identification of students experiencing homelessness either through self-reporting or a referral from a school employee. Students were denied enrollment when they lived with a relative in one district and their parents lived in another district. Districts questioned whether students were actually homeless or were living in temporary housing and if temporary housing was considered homeless.

Kubala (2014) explained that one way a state or district might choose to ensure administrative support is through the creation of a dedicated position of a “homeless liaison region coordinator” or a “district homeless liaison” (p. 65). However, lack of funding often forces districts to add the job description of LEA liaison to those who already have full-time duties such as the guidance counselor, school administrator, or federal programs director (Kubala, 2014).

Other researchers (Tanabe & Mobley, 2011; Tars, 2009) surmised that a lack of funding prevents sufficient identification of students experiencing homelessness which is the first step towards effective implementation of the *McKinney-Vento Act*. For example, after suffering a preliminary injunction from the U.S. District Court, the Hawaii Department of Education increased the number of students identified as homeless from 908 to 1640, an 80% increase (Tanabe & Mobley, 2011).

Another challenge to implementation of *McKinney-Vento* and provision of education for children experiencing homelessness is the lack of funding for transportation, or the inability or unwillingness of district officials to provide transportation through district buses, travel vouchers, bus tokens, or other means. Districts face challenges due to lack of federal funding and often do not have surplus funds for extra personnel or resources (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, 2005, p. 26; Tanabe and Mobley, 2011). School districts in Texas (James & Lopez, 2003) that made the effort to accommodate students experiencing homelessness noticed an increase in students' academic performance due to school stability.

Weber (2014) also noted that students also faced social challenges. One administrator, Mr. Lone, reported, "They're never in one place very long, it seems like. So, there is no permanency in their head. And so, everything is just temporary. . . they don't take advantage of [services]..." (Weber, 2014, p. 69). Some students did not attend school due to fear of the family moving without the child during the school day. In order to help establish a sense of permanency and connection, school administration often

encouraged one faculty member to build a meaningful relationship with the student as quickly as possible.

Students who experienced homelessness faced numerous additional challenges in areas of emotional, mental, and physical health (Weber, 2014) and often evidenced a lack of trust and anxiety. The school culture provided a stable environment that the student did not have at home. While students may have the capacity to learn material, lack of educational background may have prevented students from performance at grade level. Students were competent about knowing how to survive living on the street but may not be literate. Physically, students often came to school hungry and with physical issues that prevented focus in class.

Weber (2014) concluded that legislative initiatives did provide benefits to mitigate the effects of homelessness: required school enrollment, provided academic support, supplied meals, and equip students with school materials. However, the benefits only ensured minimal support that did not sufficiently address the breadth of needs of the student experiencing homelessness. Rural districts, in particular, lacked access to appropriate social services. Local public schools could help prevent homelessness in the future through the promotion of student academic success and connection to social support at school. Further homelessness prevention required the provision of more affordable housing and higher wages.

Another challenge for implementation of the *McKinney-Vento Act* is the lack of communication between parents and local liaisons about the rights for school choice and the benefits of the *McKinney-Vento Act* (Tanabe & Mobley, 2011; Tars, 2009). Through a



complex process, parents and students who realize that they do not receive federally mandated rights and benefits mandate by the *McKinney-Vento Act* may find a path for restitution. Kubala (2014) reported that courts often ruled in favor of the students experiencing homelessness and mandated adherence to the *McKinney-Vento Act*.

Before 2002, parents and students experiencing homelessness could file a lawsuit to mandate compliance of the *McKinney-Vento Act* by school districts and other government entities. However, the Paul D. Coverdell Teacher Protection Act of 2001, a part of NCLB, provided immunity from litigation for teachers. Each state has a particular process to appropriately consider complaints from parents, children, and LEA representatives. For example, the state of Arizona established a process parents could utilize to appeal LEA school assignment through a Dispute Resolution Process which includes written documentation from the parents and the local LEA liaison that a panel of state-level officials reviews to provide judgement on the dispute. The fact that the *McKinney-Vento Act* exists, mandating support from teachers, provides a strong rationale for this study and an avenue to procure possible support for efforts to service all students in our schools. It also articulates common struggles and suggests potential solutions.

### **The Experience of Family Homelessness**

Researchers in the 1980s explored the causes, effects, and general experience of families and children experiencing homeless. In order to depict the lives of people experiencing homelessness, sociologists Hope and Young (1986) interviewed people experiencing homelessness across the United States, including Washington D.C. and Cincinnati, Ohio. Hope and Young (1986) found that episodes of homelessness occurred

due displacement for various reasons, such as shortage of low-income housing, lack of support for persons who suffered from mental illness, unemployment, and inadequate social benefits.

At the time of their publication, Hope and Young (1986) noticed three tiers of responses to homelessness: emergency shelters (e.g., night only, drop-in centers), transitional accommodations (small centers with support for long-term solutions), and long-term or permanent residences that included services provided at the facility. Common approaches to assisting individuals experiencing homelessness included provision of facilities, financial support, and vouchers for low-cost hotels. Local examples of community support ranged from civic demonstrations to sponsorship of a theatrical play that cast individuals experiencing homelessness in multiple roles. In this early study, Hope and Young recommended that advocates, politicians, and other stakeholders use state and national conference events to exchange ideas and provide a forum for discussing policies that might lead to change. Consistent with Hope and Young's advocacy for change, this study initiates conversation about children experiencing homelessness who attend American schools and who are part of our communities.

A few years after Hope and Young published their book, Kozol (1988) described the lived experience of families, including causes of homelessness and the details of their daily lives. Kozol (1988) provided a critical account of the experiences of residents in New York and the problem of homelessness on the national level. Kozol conducted extensive interviews and observations of various participants who lived in family shelters

in New York City, such as the Martinique Hotel at Herald Square and Prince George Hotel on 28<sup>th</sup> Street. One account tells the story of Laura, whose son tested positive for lead poisoning due to poor housing. The plumbing in their bathroom leaked sewage on the floor, the radiator released steam at the eye level of her children, and the crib and beds were in disrepair and dangerous. The welfare office discontinued benefits for reasons unknown to Laura, whose four young children survived on cheese, bread, and peanut butter. Even though the oldest was five, he was not enrolled in school. Finding a better place to live with multiple children proved difficult; Laura claimed that landlords did not want to rent to a family with numerous children.

In another example reported by Kozol (1988), Rachel, a former drug addict who was a parent with older children, described living in a welfare hotel. The location was infested with rodents, and bugs, and drug use among residents was rampant. Sometimes her children could not attend school because Rachel could not wash clothes and provide them with something clean to wear due to issues with her welfare check. She contemplated giving them up to the welfare system to be cared for but continued to struggle to make ends meet and stated that she felt trapped in the welfare hotel and her circumstances.

Kozol (1988) concluded that the social welfare policy was form of terrorism visited upon poor Americans. He found that people from all ethnic backgrounds experienced homelessness, and when they lived close to the poverty line, a single incident could precipitate their move into shelters. Kozol reasoned that the causes of homelessness included loss of employment, lack of affordable housing suitable for

human use, and poor government policy related to housing and employment. Kozol argued a change in their perceptions of people on the street from outcasts to fellow humans in need of support.

. . .from pity we graduate to weariness; from weariness to impatience; from impatience to annoyance; from annoyance to dislike and sometimes to contempt . . . State terrorism as social welfare policy . . . has not yet achieved acceptance in our social order; but it may no longer be regarded as beyond imagination. When we speak the unspeakable, think the unthinkable, and permit the impermissible, how far are we from a final darkness? (Kozol, 1988, p. 229).

Masten (1992) summarized the conditions, challenges, needs, and solutions faced by families experiencing homelessness and the role of the school community during the early 1990s. The author suggested that females, often young and unskilled, functioned as the leaders of most families experiencing homelessness that were comprised of more infants and preschool-aged children than school-aged children. The most prominent ethnic group experiencing homelessness often reflected the dominant ethnic group of the most impoverished areas in a particular city. Causes of homelessness included migration for a better job opportunity, relationship conflicts, and a variety of other influences.

Homelessness is associated with vulnerability and risk for child development, and Masten (1992) recommended that children and families who are part of the homeless population need access to a variety of services through schools, preschool programs, and other options to assist with basic needs, provide stability, foster social connection with others, and provide opportunities outside the classroom to build self-confidence. Similar

to Kozol, Masten asserts, “Helping homeless children and preventing homelessness may also depend on national acceptance of the idea that poor children belong to all of us. Certainly, their development will affect all of our futures” (Masten, 1992, p. 44).

At the same time as Masten’s study, Walsh (1992) conducted a study of children experiencing homelessness in an urban area in the northeastern United States. Walsh sought to understand how the children themselves understood the causes and experience of homelessness, as well as children’s perceptions of their futures. Walsh interviewed fifty-five homeless children for approximately one-and one-half to two hours each, categorized responses, and included twenty stories in their entirety in the published manuscript; excerpts of other stories supported themes discussed in the document.

An episode of homelessness for the children in Walsh’s study was a “foreign and traumatic experience” (Walsh, 1992, p. 20), and children reported a loss of identity associated with the loss of their own home, the place where “a person can be most who he or she is” (Walsh, 1992, p. 178). Children also suffered other losses due to their traumatic experience: loss of privacy, personal space, personal possessions, friendships, and family. Due to their deep losses, children often shared feelings of sadness, depression, and despair over an experience out of their control. Amidst their traumatic experience, children also shared their hopes and dreams for the future, which Walsh (1992) interpreted as not fantasy, but rather as substantive thoughts for their selves and as reasons to keep going. Even though some children in Walsh's study reported gratefulness because the shelter provided better living conditions than they may have previously experienced, other children displayed anger and frustration with living in a place that was

not their own home and that was often associated with negative social stereotypes about people who live in shelters. For example, children reported shame about the potential association with “druggies and bums” (Walsh, 1992, p. 21). In this study, I focused on children’s musical lives and invited them to share their story to help others.

In Walsh’s study, feelings of shame that occurred during the school day; children tried to hide the fact that they lived in a shelter and impaired friendship building with classmates outside of class time. Children who did invite classmates to their shelter encountered rejection when classmates refused to come to the shelter to visit, exacerbating the children’s embarrassment and shame. Walsh (1992) explains, “Becoming homeless represents a judgment on their worth as people. When [a participant] said of himself ‘now I’m a homeless child,’ he did so with all the surplus meaning that homelessness has in our society” (Walsh, 1992, p. 30).

Children in Walsh’s study also reported fear of the unknown related to life in the shelter, their associations, and the duration of their stay. Fear of separation from family members due to potential placement in foster care or use of female-only or male-only shelters also contributed to children’s anxiety. Decisions adults made about the future well-being of children were outside of the control of the children. Meanwhile, children worried about basic needs and ways of life that most children take for granted. Walsh (1992) surmised that, “Ultimately, their pain is their utter powerlessness – as children and as poor people – to do anything about the fate that has befallen them” (Walsh, 1992, p. 179).

Walsh (1992) suggested that the stories of children experiencing homelessness actually depicted the burden of poverty as more than a lack of material resources. Children's experience of poverty also included psychological and social issues that ranged from family dysfunction, substance abuse, inadequate medical care, low-quality schools, substandard housing, lack of resources and opportunity, and shame others projected onto individuals with a low socio-economic status.

Children in Walsh's (1992) study also provided suggestions for adults to understand them better. Children asked adults to refrain from judgment and labeling children experiencing homeless as "poor and homeless" because, from their perspective, being "poor" meant being "bad." Children wanted adults to be trustworthy and to respect their privacy, allowing them have agency in when and how much they share. Yet, children did not want to be left alone or ignored. Children wanted others to know families experiencing homelessness are "nice people" (Walsh, 1992, p. 181). Children wanted professionals and adults to advocate for their needs, and the needs of their families, and above all, children wished that their stories would be deemed valuable enough to be told. Tucker, one of the participants, insisted that his real name be used saying, "Go ahead and tell them my name so I could be proud" (Walsh, 1992, p. 182). Walsh asserts that listening to children and their stories could enable professionals to serve children and families more effectively.

Walsh's study and perspectives from the children in Walsh's study (1992) informed this study in numerous ways. The desire of the children for their stories to be heard and shared contributed to the rationale and purpose of this study; children's

perspectives are important and informative. Throughout this study I sought to provide children with a chance to tell their own stories with the hope that opportunities for music making might provide an avenue for hope through emotional expression and social connection. Stories from Walsh's participants reminded me that grief, loss, gratitude, denial, and other emotions and reactions may have influenced responses and the ways children in this study perceived their realities. Like Walsh, I believe that this study of homelessness can provide a foundation for understanding, not only the musical lives, but also supports and services needed by children experiencing homelessness.

Van Ry (1993) explored the causes and effects of homelessness for family members, including children and adults. The researcher surveyed 68 families, including 190 children at two shelters, in the northwestern part of the United States between December and February in 1987. Van Ry specifically considered the events that precipitated homelessness, attempts at homelessness prevention, effects of gender and age on homelessness, intervention services needed, including services to transition out of homelessness, and policy implications that might prevent and mitigate the occurrence of family homelessness.

Primary causes of incidents of homelessness were shortages of monetary resources often due to a lack of employment. Younger family members needed more financial and social support than older ones and were more vulnerable to income loss. Van Ry (1993) observed that families required more material resources than individuals, in other words, families with younger children faced a greater risk for homelessness when resources became scarce. Other causes of homeless episodes included domestic violence



and substance abuse. Loss of employment, medical issues, non-payment of bills, major life changes, and lack of affordable housing also contributed to episodes of homelessness.

Van Ry (1993) categorized respondents into two categories: *maintainers*, who struggled to retain stable housing, and *initiators*, who voluntarily moved out of stable housing. The sub-category of “maintainers” was comprised of twenty-nine families who struggled to remain in their home and were either evicted by a landlord, rejected by relatives, or abandoned through the relocation of relatives and/or friends. Some families who voluntarily relocated admitted that they should have planned better and allotted more resources for the transition. Thirty-nine families comprised the sub-categories of “initiating” families, or those who left their homes voluntarily to find better employment, moved to a safer area, or moved to escape domestic violence. The most surprising finding, from Van Ry’s perspective, was the “number of families who left their housing voluntarily in a bold attempt to improve their situation before it worsened” (p. 91).

The majority of families experiencing homelessness included individuals who suffered from depression (62%), and over half reported effects on mental, emotional, and physical health (Van Ry, 1993). While mental illness may not have been a primary cause, the experience of homelessness often affected individuals’ mental health. Children’s sense of security became disrupted leading to emotional reactions of anger, depression, resentment, and fear. Homeless episodes also exacerbated physical problems and caused new issues. Van Ry made three recommendations as a result of this study. First, a greater supply of low-income housing needs to be available to families. Second, more job creation and more job training may prevent or mitigate the effects of homelessness.

Lastly, the welfare system needed to operate more effectively and with increased functionality for recipients of government assistance. Van Ry's focus on children was of interest as I planned this study.

In the 1990s, several researchers examined the phenomenon of child homelessness. Seltser and Miller (1993), specialists in social ethics, sought to understand the existence of families experiencing homelessness in five shelters in Los Angeles, California. Participants were ethnically diverse and included individuals of African-American, White, Hispanic, and Filipino descent. Researchers noticed a central theme of challenge to dignity and the loss of personal self-respect throughout the experience of homelessness.

Seltser and Miller (1993) used the concept of dignity as a bridge to connect objective and subjective perspectives in their investigation about being homeless; researchers evaluated both the events that occurred, and the perceptions individuals held about themselves and the meaning of their lives. Researchers found that a precipitating event, such as the end of a relationship, eviction, substance abuse, reliance on minimum wage employment, illness or other disruption, or a move to pursue better employment often caused a family to become homeless. The researchers posited that any analysis of the causes of homelessness must consider both structural and individual factors. Structural factors they identified included the lack of housing, decline in low-skill employment, and diminishment of the middle class; individual factors included the choices individuals made about their lives.

In short, we must try to recognize that homeless families are part of a world quite familiar to all of us – a world in which what happens is a combination of our own personal choices and resources along with the many factors of chance and social factors that are out of our control . . . Being homeless does not deprive people of their capacity to act, and these families remind us of the ways in which all of us are inevitably both acting and acted upon in our daily lives. (Seltser & Miller, 1993, p. 115)

Participants suggested that government welfare agencies participated in the assault on their personal dignity. While the welfare system provided monetary support, the welfare office also fostered dependence: “A message echoing through our interviews is that you must first be humiliated or brutalized by the welfare system before public money can be given to you if you are homeless” (Seltser & Miller, 1993, p. 33). In order to gain funding, participants needed to withhold rent payments to become homeless. One of the participants lamented the lack of respect for personal dignity saying, “They deal with the outside, but they don’t deal with the inside” (p. 32). Similarly, shelters could undermine dignity while at the same time providing a haven.

Seltser and Miller (1993) delineate four factors that contribute to the sustenance of personal dignity: autonomy, predictability, self-expression, and social solidarity. Autonomy describes the personal agency, or choice, an individual has in regard to daily life choices. Predictability is a foundational quality for the development of a “life project,” or living out a particular pattern of activity. In order to foster dignity, individuals also need opportunities for self-expression: “the ability to express who we are

and what we feel” (Seltser & Miller, 1993, p. 104). For example, mothers experiencing homelessness report a desire to establish a sense of predictability in the life of their children through activities such as church attendance and other attempts to get “back to normal” (Seltser & Miller, 1993, p. 103). Individuals also need opportunities to engage in activities that allow for self-expression, in order to overcome obstacles and feel pride in their achievements.

Seltser and Miller (1993) emphasized that while participants in their study need independent agency, they also need to perceive that they are “worthy of being part of a community, adults who could take care of ourselves and fit into American society” (Seltser & Miller, 1993, p. 106). They suggest that strong adherence to ideals of American individualism might isolate individuals from each other, preventing needed connection to others. For parents with dependent children, the experience of homelessness weakened their self-perceptions of being competent parents. The researchers suggested that those who provide support or services to help families experiencing homelessness should remain cognizant of the damaging potential of well-intentioned assistance.

Key ideas from Seltzer and Miller (i.e. autonomy, predictability, self-expression and social solidarity) informed the design of activities used with children in this study, as described in chapter three. In this study, children could self-select their level of participation and choose to perform for the community. My regular visits to the shelter and the karaoke equipment I donated to the after-school care program engendered predictability. I provided activities that required a low-level of skill in order to foster

connections between individuals who demonstrated a variety of levels of music ability. In this study, care was taken to recognize the dignity of children's music making through omission of comments or actions that might demean the music capabilities of children.

In the same era as Seltser and Miller, Shane (1996) investigated various aspects of the experiences of children who were experiencing homelessness in an urban location and in a small coastal town. The researcher examined the causes and implications of a lack of housing for both children experiencing homelessness and society in general. Shane also examined available solutions and provided suggestions for alternative approaches individuals could take to prevent and mitigate the effects of homelessness on children. Shane interviewed children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness to gain their perspective on encounters with housing instability. Families originated from a variety of backgrounds. While most said they were from "good families," all parents reported issues with their own parents and were cut off from their families of origin at an early age. All adult participants professed a strong commitment to their family and children. While some had a history of substance abuse, all were drug free at the time of the interviews.

Parents reported the cause of their homelessness as either relationship problems or frivolous spending, but did not report expected main causes of homelessness, such as poverty and insufficient low-income housing. Participants did not perceive factors such as divorce or having multiple children as a cause for their current episode of homelessness. Children did not appear stressed when their parents were around and desired a stable home with their parents and all of their siblings together.

Shane (1996) also interviewed five survivors, individuals who had previously experienced homelessness as children and were now adults living independently. All participants originated from dysfunctional families and were neglected or abused, including female participants who were sexually abused. Family members and participants struggled with alcoholism or drug abuse and/or mental illness, suffered emotional dysfunction, and struggled with depression and some previously attempted suicide. Some calls for help were answered, while others went unheeded. All five had someone in their past who cared about them and whom they cared about. At the time of Shane's publication, all five participants were working, studying, and living independently.

As part of the study, Shane (1996) examined messages about homelessness communicated by media in the late 1980s and early 1990s that included: *On the Run Children of the Night* (1989), *Street Kids, Seattle, Washington* (1984), *Innocence Lost* (1987), *King of the Hill* (1993), *The Grapes of Wrath* (1984). Shane suggested that most of the media about homelessness is too simplistic and passive, makes the problem of homelessness seem simplistic, and capitalizes on the suffering of others. Shane (1996) suggested that media need to address the causes of homeless episodes and offer viable solutions without the assumption of a negative result for children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Shane (1996) outlined three levels for the prevention of homelessness: primary prevention, secondary prevention, and tertiary prevention. Primary prevention includes reduction and eventual eradication of poverty by increasing the supply of decent

affordable housing and employment and developing interventions to prevent and/or repair disintegration of the family unity. Shane advocated, “For the sake of children, families need to be strengthened with the provision of economic, emotional, and social nurturance” (1996, p. 216).

Shane (1996) recommended secondary prevention measures in the first six months of experiencing homelessness. For example, varying lengths of stay in temporary housing on both a large and small scale provided flexibility and accommodated a variety of housing needs. Provision of affordable day care helped families continue in their jobs and lowered concern about their children. Help with parenting skills and in-home support services also fostered healthy families. Shane suggested social services design specific programs to assist child parents, meaning children under 16 years old having children of their own.

Lastly, Shane (1996) advised that tertiary prevention could include outreach programs that support children’s efforts to overcome life challenges and provide for their needs, including artistic activities. Finally, Shane emphasized the need for individuals to take political and social action to address prevention and mediation of effects of homelessness:

America, the first society in the world to be founded on the concept of constitutionally protected human rights and the dignity of the individual, should extend these concepts to its most valuable and fragile resource, its children and their families. America must act to find and nurture each lost child and prevent

others from getting lost. The national game of hide-and-seek should emphasize seeking, not hiding. (Shane, 1996, p. 225)

Shane's study (1996) predated this dissertation by more than two decades, and some of Shane's recommendations have already been implemented to varying degrees in some of the shelter locations I visited while searching for a site in this study. The field sites in this study provided day care for children and job training for parents, as well as parenting programs and other supports for the families. Individuals and/or organizations such as that provided music and dance activities and experiences contributed support for children through school outreach programs and community volunteers.

In another early study, Jackson (2000) investigated causes of homelessness to predict duration of the participants' homelessness experience. The researcher evaluated 102 participants who utilized assistance through the Beyond Shelter Program (BSP) in Anchorage, Alaska between May 1993 and March 1996. Jackson (2000) examined the causes of homelessness, identified variables amidst the causes, and developed a predictive model to ascertain the likelihood of permanent housing stability following an episode of homelessness.

Participants were divided into three separate cohort groups: Year 1, Year 2, and Year 3. Quantitative data were procured from reports and case management files such as referral and application forms. Other data included documentation about case management meetings and a housing status timeline depicting the date of homelessness, entry into, and exit from the BSP, as well as housing transitions after time in the BSP. In order to procure qualitative data, researchers from the University of Alaska Center for



Human Development assisted with the development of questions and interviewed twelve participants.

Jackson (2000) confirmed expected findings based on the literature that at least two out of eight major causes of homelessness also caused participants in the study to become homeless: lack of community/social support; lack of affordable housing; alcohol/substance abuse; untreated mental illness; domestic violence; family configuration; lack of economic resources; and welfare assistance

Factors that determined the length of homelessness included the lack of affordable housing, social and community support, family configuration, mental health, and substance abuse. Other expected results included descriptions of the traumatizing experience of homelessness and the benefits of social support. Jackson also identified aspects of support for those experiencing homelessness and removal of barriers to mitigate homelessness that were consistent with the literature.

Jackson (2000) recommended an increase in social support programs to lessen the recurrence of homeless episodes along with further study to determine whether personal data could predict the duration of homelessness. While statistics provided researchers with some insight, Jackson found that the perspectives of the individuals influenced their experience of homelessness:

BSP families who interpreted their experience of homelessness to mean that they were terrible people, rather than that they were people who faced terrible circumstances, had a much harder time taking action to overcome those circumstances. However, those who adopted the philosophy that they would find

a way out of the experience of homelessness by focusing on the safety and love of the home within the relationships they had with others were much more successful. (Jackson, 2000, p. 112)

### **Education and Child Homelessness**

Shortly after the implementation of the *Stewart B. McKinney Homelessness Assistance Act* in 1987, Rafferty and Rollins (1989) evaluated the educational needs of children experiencing homelessness in New York City. Researchers examined the effect of homelessness on educational potential. They compiled statistical data (e.g. school attendance, academic performance) for all children living in temporary housing according to the database of the New York City Board of Education (N=9,659), and also conducted interviews with families experiencing homelessness (N=277) who resided in shelters and hotels in New York City.

The researchers found that families experienced homelessness for an average of 16 months. Most individuals reported a previous New York address, did not have a pattern of frequent moves, and attempted to live with family or friends before their arrival at the shelter. Shelter placements were determined without consideration of community connections and often caused children to change schools multiple times. Parents were not provided information about their ability to choose educational placements. Due to high school mobility, children struggled with attendance, academic performance, and continuity of services. Rafferty and Rollins (1989) identified several effects from episodes of homelessness, including health problems due to inadequate health care,

hunger and poor nutrition, psychological problems, developmental delays, and denial of access to educational services.

Rafferty and Rollins (1989) recommended the development of more affordable housing and more comprehensive services provided by the school and the community. The researchers suggest that the Human Resources Administration (HRA) make new policies to address the needs of families experiencing homelessness. First, Rafferty and Rollins suggested that the HRA refrain from placing families with children in shelters or short-stay hotels, prompting multiple moves. Secondly, they recommended that the federal government prohibit the HRA in New York from initiating moves for families between facilities during the school year without a request or consent by the families. Additionally, Rafferty and Rollins emphasized that government and community services should continue to support the family in order to provide a continuum of care during the transition from temporary to permanent housing.

More than a decade later, Tanabe and Mobley (2011) studied homeless education policy in Hawaii and suggested that advocates should also focus on educational needs in addition to physical needs: “Although the educational needs of homeless children might not seem like an immediate threat, it is perhaps the most important key to breaking the cycle of poverty and should be given more attention” (p. 51). The authors articulated common barriers for educational success that caused frequent unexcused absences from school, such as a lack of transportation between school and home and/or enrollment requirements that preclude attendance (e.g. documentation of residency, school records, and immunization records).

Miller and Bourgeois (2013) investigated the changes in the geographic dispersion of populations considered homeless due to the economic recession of 2008 and government policies and practices. The researchers used geospatial analysis to determine the geographic centers of homeless and highly mobile (HHM) families in the greater Madison, Wisconsin area. Miller and Bourgeois also evaluated school readiness in current population clusters. The researchers noted that in the decade prior to their study (circa 1998-2008), civic and community agencies provided services to individuals experiencing homelessness through assistance with emergency shelter and transitional housing using the “continuum of care” model. Individuals experiencing homelessness used these services and created a community localized in a particular area.

Miller and Bourgeois (2013) suggested that in years more recent to their study, individuals experiencing homelessness lived in more widely dispersed locations, which could be attributed to incidents of homelessness related to the economic crisis in the ten years immediately prior to their study. Government policy also contributed to dispersion through the implementation of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP) Program, a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act in 2009. Another contributor was the implementation of the longer-term Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2012. Due to these initiatives, families who were homeless were dispersed to housing in a wide geographical location, often far away from services and from others in a similar transitional state.

Miller and Bourgeois (2013) considered the effect of homelessness through statistical analysis of families in the midwestern United States. Using addresses from the

Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), the researchers identified geographic centers for homeless and highly mobile (HHM) families, then compared the data with school district boundaries and assessed support for HHM families in those districts. They found that inner cities with a high occurrence of HHM families are often better equipped to respond to student needs, with dedicated faculty and staff to ensure appropriate support. In suburban districts, better resources and lower school mobility rates could benefit students who are HHM; however, in suburban districts which may have a lower occurrence of students who are HHM, school and district administrators may not have developed the infrastructure to accommodate students experiencing high mobility. Suburban districts often added the role of liaison for HHM students to other job descriptions. Staff were not cognizant of these extra duties, however, and may have not responded in ways that meet the needs of students in a timely manner.

DeVilbiss (2014) examined education in the lives of families experiencing homelessness in a city in the midwestern United States, particularly, the types of formal and informal education encountered by children experiencing homelessness. The researcher considered the role of education from the perspective of both the parents and the children who resided in a homeless shelter. Data were gathered through collection of documents, interviews, and observations, and then analyzed according to: “past and present trends in American homelessness, demographics of families and individuals experiencing homelessness, formal and informal education, and the economy” (DeVilbiss, 2014, p. 8).

Families reported that before coming to live at the shelter, they experienced frequent changes in schools. Once they gained the status of “homeless,” as specified in the *McKinney-Vento Act*, families became eligible for various educational services. DeVilbiss (2014) surmised that the *McKinney-Vento Act* made a positive difference in the lives of children experiencing homelessness because it ensured the child’s participation in school activities and provided job training for parents so that they could procure more stable employment. The researcher recommended a variety of ways shelter staff could adapt current programs to enhance educational opportunities. DeVilbiss also suggested that further research could consider how school districts respond to students experiencing homelessness, particularly, the factors that hinder or help the district in providing essential resources and services.

### **Specific skills of children experiencing homelessness**

Masten et al. (2012) examined the predictive correlation between executive function (EF) skills and success in the classroom among students experiencing homelessness. Researchers evaluated 138 children in Minneapolis and similar urban school districts. All students intended to enter kindergarten or first grade and resided in selected emergency shelters during the summers of 2008 and 2009. Researchers wanted to compare the potential of the EF skill test as a predictive tool for school success in comparison to a more traditional IQ assessment. Secondly, researchers wanted to determine if the EF assessment in the shelter could indicate functionality of a student if administered in a different context (school).

Students engaged in six tasks that evaluated both emotionally charged “hot EF” tasks (e.g., Gift Delay) and more neutral “cool EF” tasks (e.g., Simon Says, Peg Tapping). Executive function was evaluated using indicators such as inhibitory control, delay of gratification, and set shifting. Researchers also evaluated students for levels of intelligence using various intelligence tests, and student academic potential with the HBQ-T Academic Competence subscale, a five-item evaluation tool. Performance on executive function and intelligence tests were then compared to factors that indicated student success: academic competence, peer acceptance, prosocial behavior, inattention-impulsivity, and aggressive-defiant behavior (Masten et al., 2012, p. 381).

Researchers found that students who scored higher on tests for executive function also received higher ratings on school outcome assessments in all areas. Students who scored higher on the intelligence tests, but not the executive function tests, only scored higher in the area of academic competence. Researchers noticed a link between evidence of executive function skills and the level of risk or resilience children exhibited that fostered classroom success. Masten et al. (2012) recommended that further research on executive function skills could provide insight into academic disparities and develop more effective interventions and support for students experiencing homelessness.

Other researchers have considered the relationship between academic growth and episodes of homelessness. Parks, Stevens, and Spence (2007), researchers from England, conducted a literature review to determine if current research, at that time, identified cognitive impairments in children and adolescents experiencing homelessness.

Researchers used systematic key-word searches in standard databases to procure relevant

articles. Parks et al. discovered that, at the time of publication, professionals had only evaluated and reported about 2,000 children and youth experiencing homelessness in journal publications. Approximately 98% of the studies on cognition were conducted in the United States. Researchers recommended that professionals integrate cognitive and mental health screenings into existing programs that provide intervention and assistance to children and adolescents experiencing homelessness.

### **Homelessness and high-mobility (HHM) student outcomes**

Fantuzzo, LeBoeuf, Chen, Rouse, and Culhane (2012) explored the effects of school mobility on academic growth in young children. Researchers evaluated statistical data about children from an intact cohort of third-grade students (N=8,762) in Philadelphia. The study only included students born in the selected area who attended an elementary school in the School District of Philadelphia, had available achievement data for reading and math, and demonstrated problems with being engaged in classroom learning. Researchers identified a student as having a homeless housing status if his/her parents resided in a shelter at any time since the birth of the child. The sample included students with no background of homelessness and/or school mobility, students with high incidents of school mobility, students who were homeless but remained in the same school, and students with histories of both homelessness and high school mobility.

Researchers collected data from the Office of Supportive Housing (OSH), school district records, standardized reading and math results (Complete Battery Plus version of the TerraNova CTB/McGraw-Hill, 1997), Problems in the Classroom Engagement Scale (PCES, 14-item checklist to identify challenges students have with “routine learning



experiences,” p. 395), prior academic level as assessed by their kindergarten teachers using Letter Naming Fluency, and other evaluations of literacy.

In analysis of academic achievement, Fantuzzo et al. (2012) found that children who experienced homelessness, but not high school mobility, did not perform differently on academic assessments than children without experiences of high school mobility or homelessness. Children who experienced high school mobility received lower scores on reading and math assessments in comparison with students who had no experiences of high school mobility or homelessness. Children with both experiences of high school mobility and homelessness received the lowest scores on academic assessments. Children who experienced homelessness and high school mobility rated lower on reading than math achievement assessments.

While incidents of homelessness alone did not significantly affect academic achievement, family instability did appear to affect classroom engagement of the children in the study, with more problems in social than task engagement. Fantuzzo et al. (2012) supported the rationale for the *McKinney-Vento Act* which mandates school districts maintain school stability, whenever possible, for students experiencing homelessness.

Students experiencing homelessness face numerous challenges. Does homelessness or high mobility create a greater barrier to success? Cutuli et al. (2013) also examined whether the experience of homelessness or high mobility had the most impact on learning. Researchers evaluated the academic trajectories of homeless and highly mobile (HHM) students in Minneapolis. They compared the risk factors of housing status and socioeconomic class to academic achievement in reading and math. Researchers

evaluated the growth trajectory of learning during the time when episodes of homelessness occurred to determine whether HHM status disrupted learning for those students.

Researchers analyzed five years of achievement and enrollment data for students in the third through eighth grade from the Minneapolis Public School district using linear mixed modeling (LMM). Low-income student data were divided into three low-income groups: students on a reduced price meal plan, students on a free meal plan, and students who were homeless or highly mobile (HHM). Cutuli et al. (2013) assigned almost 75% of the students from the general student population into one of the three categories for low-income students.

Students who experienced any incidents of homelessness between third through eighth grade demonstrated considerably lower achievement scores in the areas of reading and math when compared to underperforming poor but housed students. Over time, the gap widened between the HHM group and the other groups, with no evidence of “catching up.” Academic growth for HHM students increased more slowly in comparison to other groups, and students also demonstrated lower levels of achievement in reading and math during the years following identification as HHM. After students were housed for multiple years, academic growth increased to a greater degree. During the years students were HHM, growth in reading typically surpassed growth in math, perhaps due to the complex nature of math, whereas reading can continue to be practiced, producing some gradual growth.

Students who are HHM may encounter other life events that raise the risk for stress and low academic achievement. Cutuli et al. (2013) recommended the use of “protective factors,” such as effective parenting, focus on cognitive skills, and development of ability for self-regulation could improve achievement and mitigate potential negative influences of HHM episodes. Parenting, cognitive skills, and self-regulation could also improve student resilience, a key contributor to HHM students’ achievement and growth. Researchers recommended further research to understand how risk and resilience affected student outcomes, possibly from an ecological-developmental perspective.

In another study on academic progress and students experiencing homelessness and high mobility (HHM), Herbers et al. (2012) considered the predictive potential of an oral reading assessment (ORA) for academic risk in later grade levels. Data were procured from student records (N=18,011) regularly maintained by the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS). Researchers selected student records that included achievement data from a first-grade oral reading exam, HHM risk status, and standardized academic assessments. Researchers compared score differences for the following risk groups based on identified socio-economic status: students on a general reduced price meal program (not identified to received special status), students on a free meal program, and HHM students.

On the first-grade ORA, the general risk group scored the highest ( $M=86.7$ ), followed by the reduced-price lunch risk group ( $M =65.7$ ), and the free lunch risk group ( $M=47.7$ ). The risk group for HHM students received the lowest scores ( $M = 40.8$ ).

Overall, students who received higher ORA scores also demonstrated a higher level of achievement in reading and math achievement assessments in third grade and a lower decline in eighth grade. The researchers note, “This finding is consistent with research demonstrating the cumulative nature of academic achievement and the importance of early reading skills for subsequent learning” (Herbers et al., 2012, p. 370).

Over time early reading achievement correlated to an increase in academic achievement. The more students could read in first grade, the more they could improve in both math and reading later. The researchers affirmed that this study supported evidence in the literature that early educational success may be significant for children experiencing risk due to poverty and residential mobility. Herbers et al. (2012) determined that HHM students did not exclusively benefit from early success in reading. They recommended more coordination across schools, districts, shelters, and community-based programs to maintain consistency for HHM students as they developed school readiness skills, including both academic skills (i.e. counting and naming letters) and self-regulation skills (i.e. focus, following directions, social skills, etc.). Herbers et al. also suggested that “Early education programs that focus on school readiness skills and involve families likely will have the greatest potential to support academic resilience among high-risk children” (p. 373).

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 extended the expectations of the *McKinney-Vento Act* which mandates districts provide transportation to students experiencing homelessness in order to ensure that a student can remain at his/her school of origin. James and Lopez (2003) conducted case studies of two Texas districts –

Houston ISD (HISD) and Victoria ISD (VISD) – and their efforts to implement the federal policy mandated by the *McKinney-Vento Act*, even prior to the reauthorization of the NCLB, to reduce student mobility. Both districts reported that decreasing student mobility yielded positive results including higher attendance and improved academic performance.

Houston Independent School District (HISD) was the seventh largest district in the United States, comprising almost 211,000 students at the time of the research. In the 2001-2002 school year, students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches totaled 79% of the school population, and HISD was largely comprised of Hispanic and African American students. District officials estimated that 1,500 of the students in 2001-2002 experienced an episode of homelessness at least once during the school year. While earlier McKinney-Vento initiatives did not require the school to provide transportation to help students remain in their school of origin, HISD provided transportation services so that students could remain in their school of origin, even if students moved several times. Aric Taylor, HISD's transportation director commented:

It's not that hard to do in a large district such as ours. We've got buses going in all directions across the city. One of them is bound to be on a route that will meet the needs of a particular student. It's usually just a matter of sending a bus a few streets over to accommodate a student's particular situation. We don't look at kids as homeless or any other category – we just see them as students who need to get from Point A to Point B. (James & Lopez, 2003, p. 134)

Taylor, HISD's transportation director, surmised that the greatest challenge to providing transportation was that highly mobile students may move with speed and frequency. For example, a mother and student might work with the school district to arrange for transportation and then move without any warning. The district's McKinney-Vento liaison or homelessness liaison facilitated transportation, and district staff often added or modified existing stops, sometimes adding special routes to circumvent dangerous neighborhood areas and ensure safety for all students. HISD also provided bus tokens to supply transportation for appointments at service providers, school meetings, and after-school and extracurricular activities for students experiencing homelessness. As such, HISD provided transportation services that extended past the requirements of NCLB. In the same study, James and Lopez (2003) considered the efforts of a second school district in Texas. Victoria Independent School District (VISD) was a smaller district with around 14,500 students also located in southeast Texas. The district was geographically broad, covering over 600 square miles. With seven bus routes, some students arrived at home after 5:00 p.m. The student body of VISD was comprised of a majority Hispanic American population (50%) with 40% identified as White, and 8% reported as African American (Texas Education Agency, 2002). Students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches comprised 49.8% of the student body.

Victoria ISD officials initiated a policy of "One Child – One School – One Year" in 1995 to reduce student mobility within the district. Before the initiative, highly mobile students changed schools frequently within the district. Teachers and parents reported positive results after students remained in their school of origin: school attendance

improved, attendance-based state funding increased, and academic assessment scores improved.

District officials also established KIDZConnection in order to manage the homeless education program, and they recruited parents to act as liaisons on every campus in the district. Parent liaisons identified families experiencing homelessness and appropriate steps to take in order to provide assistance and connect these families with services and support. James and Lopez (2003) reported that parent liaisons provided transportation, rendered emotional support, e-mailed district teachers and staff to request donations for supplies needed by families, and helped young parents find child care so they could continue their education.

#### **Parents and children experiencing homelessness.**

Miller (2011) examined how families experiencing homelessness accessed educational resources by gathering data from mothers experiencing homelessness in a large urban region located in the eastern United States. Miller surveyed 151 mothers, interviewed 51 mothers in 12 focus groups, and analyzed a countywide homeless management information system. More specifically, the researcher explored how the families experiencing homelessness perceived and utilized residential homeless serving agencies (RHSAs) and community-based educational services (i.e. Head Start, after-school programs).

Miller (2011) differentiated between *access* (families' knowledge of available resources) and *mobilization* (families' actual use of resources). Barriers to access and mobilization of resources through RHSAs, schools, and other community-based

resources for educational needs included broken personal relationships, demands of homelessness, lack of efficient communication of information, issues with transportation and location, and other factors not frequently reported.

Families who lived in “doubled-up” conditions prior to homelessness reported unhealthy relationships with family members in their previous housing who prevented access to help from service agencies. Miller (2011) quoted one mother’s response: “It’s almost sabotage. I take a step forward and they’re [family] whacking me back” (p. 556).

Miller (2011) suggested that the hardship of homelessness, including the physical, mental, and emotional strain, also prevented utilization of services. Mothers reported feeling overwhelmed by the traumatic crisis of homelessness, in addition to not having time to make appropriate connections for educational services, help with addictions, physical and mental problems, procuring housing, becoming more financially stable, and finding childcare. Miller observed that while some mothers were paralyzed by fear and guilt, others had emotional barriers with school staff and administration engendered by frustration and anger.

Mothers were overwhelmed by too much information available online and through print media. One mother shared: “It’s so depressing looking at the whole packets they give you. It’s way too much” (Miller, 2011, p. 558). In contrast, mothers also indicated that lack of information prevented mobilization of resources. One mother intimated that “everything’s a secret. You don’t even realize the things that are available because nobody tells you” (p. 558). Previous assumptions mothers held about shelter living often prevented mothers from accessing the shelter and associated resources until



all other options were exhausted. Miller surmised that if parents cannot mobilize resources, then support for education for their children diminishes.

Mothers reported that a lack of transportation to community-based programs prevented access to those services. Miller (2011) utilized county mapping software to show a wide variance in the proximity between residential homeless serving agencies (RHSA) and local after-school programs and day care services. Public transportation required a large time commitment and was not a practical solution for busy mothers with multiple children. Mothers also were not always able to procure transportation for their children to participate in school activities in their school of origin, which was not always the closest school to the RHSA where the family resided.

Miller (2011) concluded that RHSAs played a critical role in helping families to overcome limitations and mobilize relevant resources. When asked what helped make connections with educational resources, most mothers mentioned staff and resources available through the RHSA where they resided. Miller articulated common factors that facilitated connections such as stability and safety, positive bonds in relationships with other residents, access to bridges and advocates who could help facilitate connections, support on a daily basis, information sharing, and staff who could advocate for their needs. Miller advocated that more RHSAs foster programs to serve the educational needs of families and develop a dense network to provide a sense of safety and security. Once a closely connected support system was established, families could expand their network and procure additional information and opportunities. Miller recommended that all school affiliates (teachers, administrators, social workers, and counselors) expand awareness of

community-based resources, and connect families experiencing homelessness with additional resources beyond school-based programs and relationships.

Israel and Jozefowicz-Simbeni (2009) explored how mothers perceived strengths of their children experiencing homelessness and how the children themselves perceived strengths. Researchers recruited 50 mothers and children (ages 6 to 12 years old) from a large, city-wide urban school district in the midwestern United States. Participants were evaluated for child mental and physical wellbeing and perception of self using measures such as the Child Behaviour Checklist (CBCL), Children's Depression Inventory (CDI), a Self-Perception Profile for children (SPP), mother-perceived strengths of children, and a housing and home stability measure: Housing, Education, and Income Timeline (HEIT).

The researchers found that while children exhibited symptoms of difficulty in some aspects of behavioral and emotional functioning, mothers reported specific strengths children used to cope with behavioral and emotional challenges. Some mothers shared how their children cared for younger siblings or helped others. Mothers identified their children as assertive and leaders, though at times this strength was reported in combination with more negative descriptions of being "stubborn" or "aggressive." In the area of intellect, mothers described their children as intelligent and bright. In the area of physical attributes, mothers described their children as having athletic ability. More often, girls were described as beautiful although one mother described her daughter as very strong and physically active.

All children completed a measure of social competence, adapted for the appropriate age. Children of parents who rated their children's intellectual and scholastic competence higher, also evaluated their own self-competence higher than children whose mothers did not report strengths in the area of academics. Children whose parents reported strength in the area of compliance also rated their own compliance higher. Children rated their own social competence in regards to the strengths and weaknesses of their peer relationships.

Israel and Jozefowicz-Simbeni (2009) found results consistent with previous findings that children experiencing homelessness demonstrated reduced function in emotional and behavioral capacities. However, the focus on more positive qualities of children, such as strengths exhibited, provided valuable perspective on the experience of children and homelessness, in contrast to most research, which focuses on how children cope in negative ways. The researchers emphasize that their study, "advances our understanding of the mechanisms homeless children use to buffer against the severity of their harsh experiences" (Israel and Jozefowicz-Simbeni, 2009, p. 162). The researchers proposed that further research in other contexts might provide a more complex understanding of the problem of homelessness and potential solutions. This study is a step in that direction.

Children experiencing homelessness face challenges and risks that can be overcome through support and nurturing of adults who are directly involved in their lives. One such influential relationship occurs between a child and a parent. Herbers, Cutuli, Lafavor, Vrieze, and Leibel (2011) examined the influence of parenting on the academic

function of young children experiencing homeless. During the summer and fall of 2006, researchers evaluated participants who were part of homeless families and who resided in a large urban emergency homeless shelter. Participants included families with children between ages 4 and 7 years with an average stay in the shelter of one month. Families were often composed of a single female parent with multiple young children. Only data from primary caregivers were included in this report.

Herbers et al. (2011) considered three indications in children of parenting quality: general intellectual (IQ) skills and executive functioning skills (EF) in relation to academic achievement, parental influence on school attendance and behaviors that could contribute to academic achievement, and risk from membership in a particular sociodemographic on academic achievement. The researchers evaluated the children for executive function, intellectual function, risk status, and teacher reports of academic function for children who began kindergarten or first grade. They determined parenting quality from evaluation of a parent interview report by trained evaluators, and observers' rating of various components of quality parenting.

The researchers identified practices that fostered intellectual functioning such as talking and reading with children, instilling problem-solving skills, and direct instruction. Support for development of EF included providing emotional support, "less direct control of behavior, dyadic regulation of child arousal, modeling or actively teaching self-control, and consistent discipline" (Herbers et al., 2011, p. 97). Parental positive attitudes towards school and support for academic learning as well as fostering of social skills also

engendered more positive relationships in the school environment and maintained motivation for school endeavors.

Consistent with their hypothesis, Herbers et al. (2011) found that academic success in children was associated with parenting quality. High quality parenting protected children from academic risks normally associated with homelessness. If a child exhibited high executive function skills, the child appeared to be able to mediate effects of ineffective parenting. Researchers surmised that the IQ of a child might have a mediating effect on ineffective parenting, but a larger sample size was needed for definitive results. Researchers found that children with lower parenting quality and higher risk were more likely to encounter academic challenges. The researchers surmised that:

High-quality parenting functions as a powerful protective factor in young homeless children's adjustment to school. Parents in homeless families can foster resilient functioning with warmth, consistent discipline and structure, and positive expectations in much the same way that parents in other families foster competence. (Herbers et al., 2011, p. 98)

### **Teachers and children experiencing homelessness.**

Other critical adult influences in the lives of children who are homeless include their teachers. How do teachers perceive children who are homeless? How can a teacher's attitudes and expectations determine how a student who is homeless will perform in school? Lindley (1994) examined the correlation between student housing status, teacher background, and teacher attitudes towards homelessness. The researcher surveyed 110 public school educators of students in kindergarten to twelfth grade in a New Jersey

suburban school district. The researcher randomly assigned respondents to two groups and asked them to complete a Teacher Expectancy Questionnaire (TEQ; Aloia & Aloia, 1983). The questionnaire contained transfer student information for a student who was either housed or homeless; half of the subjects completed a questionnaire on student transfer data for a student who was housed, students, and half completed a questionnaire on student transfer data for a student who was homeless. All subjects also completed a personal demographic data sheet to provide background information on post-baccalaureate credits, teaching experience, current level teaching, and perceived contact with students who were homeless. Subjects also completed other assessments, including the Causal Dimension Scale (CDS; Russell, 1982), the Attitudes Toward Homeless People Scale (ATHP), and the Attitudes Toward Disabled People Scale (Yuker & Block, 1986) which was modified for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Teachers rated student housing status as the most influential factor in academic success for students experiencing homelessness (49%), while for housed students, teachers reported that student characteristics were the most influential factor in student success (25%) (Lindley, 1994). The more contact teachers had with students experiencing homelessness, the less positive their attitude towards students experiencing homelessness which indicated higher expectations of stereotypical behaviors from homeless students. Teachers in advanced grades had a higher perception of self-efficacy and lower expectation of behavior issues, while teachers of students experiencing homelessness in younger grades reported a lower perception of self-efficacy and higher expectation of behavior issues. While previous studies reported that more contact with students

experiencing homelessness resulted in more positive attitudes (Green, Adams & Turner, 1988; Jackman & Crane, 1986), Lindley's study did not confirm those results. Yunker (1987) reported that the quality of contacts teachers encounter with students experiencing homelessness is the most critical factor of teachers' attitudes.

Lindley (1994) recommended the development of programs for teachers that include training in counseling, study skills, and social skills in order to improve the quality of contact between teachers and students. The researcher suggested that districts with large populations of students experiencing homelessness could develop master teacher and mentoring programs to facilitate development of less experienced teachers' responsiveness to students experiencing homelessness.

Sakaris (1999) investigated factors that influenced teacher attitudes and expectations of students experiencing homelessness. The researcher evaluated subjects (N=77) who were teachers in two school districts in a suburban area. Sakaris sought to determine the correlation between teacher attitudes and expectations of students experiencing homelessness and predictors such as type of teacher (e.g. special or general education), teacher efficacy, perception of quality (e.g. positive or negative), amount of contact with people experiencing homelessness, perceptions of classroom organization and support, and perceptions of collaboration within the school.

Sakaris (1999) provided each subject with a vignette and a packet with various assessment instruments that included: a demographic questionnaire, Attitudes toward Homeless People Scale (ATHP; Lindley, 1994), Teacher Efficacy Scale (TES; Gibson & Dembo, 1984), Teacher Expectation Questionnaire (TEQ; Aloia & Aloia, 1983), two

subscales derived from the Classroom Environment Scale (CES; Trickett & Moos, 1995), a collaboration measure (Lee & Smith, 1996), and a contact scale (Marks, 1992). Fifty-nine teachers or 77% of respondents reported no experience teaching students who were homeless.

Results indicated that, among the subjects, self-perception of efficacy correlated positively to the teacher's attitude towards and expectations of students who are homeless. Sakaris (1999) concluded that the greater the teacher belief in his/her efficacy to help a child experiencing homelessness to learn, the higher the expectations for the child and the more the child achieved. The researcher suggested that an increase in teacher self-efficacy could improve expectations of and positive attitudes towards students experiencing homelessness.

Other aspects of teaching also influenced teacher attitudes and expectations toward students experiencing homelessness. Teachers who preferred an orderly and structured classroom reported higher overall, academic, and behavioral expectations for students experiencing homelessness. Sakaris (1999) also found that quality of contact with students who are homeless correlated to positive attitudes more than the quantity of contact time. The more overall teaching experience a teacher reported, the higher the overall, academic, and behavioral expectations for students who are homeless. Support for teachers did not significantly correlate with attitudes and expectations of teachers for students who are homeless.

Kim (2012) explored how the beliefs of pre-service teachers adjusted following participation in a community-based program that served students experiencing



homelessness. The researcher conducted her study with pre-service teachers who attended a private university in the western United States. All participants were part of an early childhood education program and enrolled in a course in the fall semester of 2010 in which they were expected to interact with the local community. In particular, Kim conducted research on changes in pre-service teachers' beliefs about children experiencing homelessness following participation in a community-based field experience at a shelter.

Kim (2012) evaluated pre-service teacher beliefs before and after the field experience to determine both changes in pre-service teachers' beliefs and the effectiveness of the community-based field experience. Data were collected from class discussions and assignments that included reflective journals and group projects with various readings integrated throughout the semester. Pre-service teachers also observed how children played at the shelter as well as characteristics of the shelters themselves. The researcher observed and took notes on observations of the pre-service teachers during this process.

Kim (2012) found that pre-service teachers needed to evaluate the assumptions and about children in poverty in order to more appropriately respond to students' needs. For example, at the beginning of the study, pre-service teachers reported that children who were homeless were deficit; they used mainly negative labels to describe children who were homeless. Pre-service teachers also related their concerns for personal safety when visiting the homeless shelter.

After their field experience, pre-service teachers responded with surprise at the largely normal behavior exhibited by children in the shelter; children in the shelter played in similar ways to children they previously encountered. Additionally, pre-service teacher perspectives on parents changed; participants observed that parents of children living the shelter cared about their children and had similar expectations as middle-class mothers. Other fears and concerns of the pre-service teachers diminished over the period of the engagement in the shelter when pre-service teachers realized how complex and unstable the situations are for children experiencing homelessness. The participants realized that some children who are homeless are invisible in schools; even their classroom teachers may not be aware of their special challenges.

Kim (2012) proposed that pre-service teachers need more experience with marginalized children in order to sufficiently confront stereotypical beliefs and assumptions. Kim suggested that professional development could raise awareness and provide understanding about the lives of children experiencing homelessness. Use of carefully designed field experiences in a more prolonged and consistent manner could provide perspectives for understanding diverse populations, thereby helping pre-service teachers understand the community in which students live and the resources available to help students experiencing homelessness.

***Effective classroom strategies for children experiencing homelessness.***

Pickles (2014) scrutinized the pedagogical practices of elementary educators whom the researcher determined successfully taught students experiencing homelessness. Eight teacher participants who taught in elementary schools were identified from a

convenience sample in a suburban school district. Pickles described the instructional and classroom practices of the teachers and considered the degree to which the teachers altered instructional or non-instructional classroom practices based on whether the student was housed or experiencing homelessness. Data were gathered via teacher interviews, collected artifacts (e.g. lesson plans), and observations of classroom instruction using the Differentiated Classroom Observation Scale (DCOS).

Pickles (2014) identified themes in the areas of planning, learning groups, and homework. Teachers reported that they often conducted backward planning based on assessments, utilizing a variety of differentiated activities to reach an academic goal. Teachers believed students experiencing homelessness faced challenges due to a lack of diagnostic information provided to teachers and academic and social deficits of students. Participants often noticed that students experiencing homelessness were insecure because they had a different base of academic and social knowledge than their peers.

Teachers reported numerous benefits to utilization of small group or grouping by ability levels or needs. Students built relationships with other students, with the teacher, and learned how to cooperate with others when in small groups. Also, teachers were able to more effectively differentiate instruction through use of small learning groups.

Pickles (2014) reported the need to adapt required homework for students experiencing homelessness. Teachers provided all supplies needed for homework so that the family did not have to procure materials. Also, students experiencing homelessness needed time during class to complete homework. Teachers also allowed more time for

homework to be returned, provided more frequent reminders, and occasionally simplified assignments.

In order to foster student success, Pickles (2014) found that teachers built relationships and established trust with students to make them feel safe and accepted regardless of the duration of attendance. Teachers also fostered effective communication between home and school through various strategies, such as reflections, daily reports, end of the week report, and parent correspondence logs that provided needed support for families.

Teachers used academic strategies to support students experiencing homelessness (Pickles, 2014). One teacher helped students with organization of papers, provided class notes, and a completed study guide. Another teacher made directions more explicit, checked in frequently with the student, and ensured the student had necessary class materials. Teachers used written goal charts to help students focus on targeted social and academic areas of growth.

Stronge and Reed-Victor (2000) compiled various suggestions to promote educational growth for students experiencing homelessness. Stronge (2000) emphasized that communities needed to foster awareness, enlist parental support, provide early childhood education, and assist students with exceptional needs. Young children experiencing homelessness needed physical care, space, stability/security, autonomy/self-control, positive social interactions, and competency/creativity (Eddowes & Butcher, 2000, p. 25).

Reed-Victor (2000) outlined adult characteristics and protective factors that engendered resilience throughout the experience of homelessness that included warmth, high expectations, monitoring, mentoring, growth opportunities, stimulating and organized care, and participation in values-oriented organizations. Families were most concerned about meeting physical needs, family separation, threats to privacy and safety. Parents encountered barriers to education of their children that included transportation and enrollment, low self-confidence, and lack of awareness of available support.

### **Homelessness in Music Research**

Some music studies exist about individuals experiencing homelessness in the areas of music therapy. Iliya (2011) described her use of vocal music psychotherapy to provide intervention and support for residents at a shelter for men in New York City. The research was comprised of case studies of individuals who participated in both group and individual sessions of music therapy over a number of months. Iliya found the use of singing in therapy provided a way for participants to engage in a meaningful, creative activity that was also accessible. Group singing enabled connections with others and opportunities for socialization.

Davidson and Bailey (2005) compared the experiences of two adult choirs of differing geographic and economic characteristics. Choir 1 was located in Quebec, Canada and was comprised of native French speaking men experiencing homelessness. Choir 2 was comprised of both men and women of various backgrounds, including individuals experiencing homelessness, who resided in Nova Scotia, Canada.

The researchers found that choral singing similarly provided emotional benefits to both groups with no particular change in individuals with differing socioeconomic statuses. Davidson and Bailey (2005) surmised that participation in the choir provided marginalized singers with a needed support system and allowed for positive connections and communication with the general public. All singers reported enjoyment from singing in the choir. Singers from a middle-class background intimated insecurity about personal musicianship skills, supported by an additional study described in the article.

Woelfer (2012) investigated young people (ages 16-24) experiencing homelessness in Vancouver, British Columbia and Seattle Washington. The researchers surveyed 100 individuals, interviewed twenty people, and recruited participants for activities in which young people designed a device to play music to be used by youth experiencing homelessness. The majority of respondents listened to music between two and four hours a day.

Subjects reported that the top two reasons for listening to music were to calm down or relieve tension and help get through difficult times. Some participants used music to develop a unique identity, while others identified with the stories of the artists shared in the lyrics. One participant used music to inspire his artistic creations but could not listen to sad songs; they triggered symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. One participant played music to survive when living on the street with a drug addiction; music functioned as a tool to help overcome her heroin addiction. Some participants reported the influence of their families on their music activities. Young men preferred hip hop, rock and techno. Young women preferred R & B, rock, and hip hop.

Regarding music and children experiencing homelessness, Staum (1993) compared use of music and nonmusical [sic] interventions in work with children experiencing homelessness. Staum conducted verbal counseling sessions and periodically incorporated music, utilizing singing, dance/rap, instruments, and drama. The inconsistency of attendance of participants proved problematic and the researcher did not notice significant improvement. Staum suggested use of familiar, fast-paced music to foster greater participation.

Staum and Brotons (1995) explored preferences of children experiencing homelessness for food, music, or clothing. Additionally, the researchers examined the potential of music interventions to develop social skills of empathy and cooperation. Children were provided with snacks and toys as an incentive for participation. On a rotating intervention schedule, children received nine sessions during which they either were evaluated for social skills, taped a music video, shared a full meal with their families, or were provided with new clothing. During the final phase of the study, children were required to choose which intervention they preferred: make a music video, receive a full dinner, or receive new clothes. Two of the participants chose new clothes, one chose a meal, three chose to make another music video. However, attendance was sporadic, making consistent claims problematic.

Fairchild, Thompson, and McFerran (2016) conducted a project to explore the meaning of a group music performance in preadolescent girls who participated in a music therapy program. The researchers interviewed both the girls and their parents about the experience.

One of the themes that emerged throughout the experience was the varied and intense emotions reported by the participants such as anxiety about the performance, boredom due to the effort required for preparation, and pride in the accomplishment after the final performance. Participants also commented that they connected with others to share support and their parents noticed growth in their children. Family members were in the audience to provide support; some of the family members became emotional during the performance. Researchers recommended that children meet the week after a performance to debrief the experience because the children expressed similar sentiments. Additionally, parents needed more information on how they could support their children in preparation for the performance. Researchers also recommended that the therapists, or other adults, who direct the performance need to supply children with strategies to overcome performance anxiety.

### **Chapter Summary**

Homelessness is a persistent problem in the United States that includes families with children in American schools. The federal government has attempted to address homelessness through legislative mandates, such as the *McKinney-Vento Act*, and court rulings have further clarified these regulations. School district administrators and staff who encourage compliance with provisions of the *McKinney-Vento Act*, such as maintaining children's attendance in their school of origin during episodes of homelessness, see more academic growth among their students experiencing homelessness than when support systems are not in place. However, other districts and stakeholders continue to struggle to comply with the federal mandate decades after the



initial implementation of *McKinney-Vento*. Barriers to education continue to exist for students experiencing homelessness.

Homelessness is a traumatic experience for all involved and assaults personal dignity for those directly experiencing housing insecurity. Some children demonstrate great strength and resilience, particularly if they have the consistent support of their parents or caregivers and other caring adults. Others demonstrate depression, anger, or other symptoms related to this traumatic incident in their lives. The best strategies for direct classroom or school intervention include providing a safe environment that includes multiple areas of support for success and facilitates consistent parent-school communication. Music research and homelessness has largely focused on the benefits of therapeutic interventions, such as the benefits of choral ensembles and youth listening habits.

## Chapter 3

### Research Overview and Design

#### **Introduction of the Qualitative Approach**

This study explores the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness and how their musical lives intersect with other individuals in their worlds. Use of a qualitative methodology in this study allowed me to investigate the meaning of musical engagement in the lives of the participants and the development of their relationships, also known as network connections through examination of the following questions:

1. What are the past, present, and imagined future musical lives of children experiencing homelessness?
2. How are their musical lives reflective of their structures of relationships in their lives?
3. What do the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness indicate for practice and policy?

In the paragraphs below, I provide an overview of foundational principals for qualitative inquiry and outline the design process of this particular study. In addition, I explain the theoretical lens that framed analysis in this study – Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory.

A researcher who utilizes qualitative inquiry cannot aspire to proof, certainty or generalizable truths. Instead, the researcher explores meanings, relationships, connections

between, and among participants and the focus of the study or central phenomenon (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). Qualitative research relies on various assumptions made by the researcher and the reader.

The most basic assumption of qualitative inquiry is that truth is not knowable. Glesne (2011) explains that in qualitative research “. . . reality is socially constructed, complex, and ever changing” (p. 8). Because a single reality cannot be known from a universal perspective, the researcher discovers knowledge by gathering and generating data from multiple perspectives in close experiences with participants for extended periods in the field. Creswell (2013) notes, “This is how knowledge is known – through the subjective experiences of people” (p. 20). In order to minimize the influence of the researcher and maximize the perspectives of the participants, data generation occurs in-person in the natural setting of the participants as much as possible. Extensive time in the field enhances the trustworthiness of the study (Creswell, 2013, p. 47). In the next section I outline the design I have chosen for this study – case study.

### **Case study.**

Human beings have derived knowledge from experience and, or cases, for ages. Researchers in the domains of business, science, social sciences, psychology, and other disciplines use case study design to examine questions and problems that interest them. Stake (2005) clarifies that a case study is not a particular qualitative design but “a choice of what is to be studied,” in what Stake calls a “bounded system” (2005, p. 444). The researcher seeks to address a problem through inquiry of a particular case or set of cases in specific times and locations.

Stake (2005) delineates five elements in the design of case study research: issue choice, triangulation (in more contemporary terms “multiple perspectives”), experiential knowledge, contexts, and activities. The researcher may select among three types of case studies to study: an *intrinsic case study* that focuses analysis on a specific case, an *instrumental case study* that provides insight into an issue or rethinks a particular generalization, or a *multiple case study* (i.e. *collective case study*) that explores a larger phenomenon or general issue.

Yin (2014) articulates a difference between a case study and case study inquiry. Researchers use case study to indicate what they will study and to interrogate “how” and “why” questions. Case study inquiry outlines how the research will proceed. Lin delineates three characteristics of case study inquiry: a unique context for field research with numerous variables and only a few data points of interest for the researcher; multiple data points from various perspectives (triangulation); and theoretical propositions on which to build the study.

The primary advantage of case study inquiry is that the researcher can delve deeply into the rationale and meaning of a particular problem or relationship. Glesne advises researchers to “focus on the complexity within the case, on its uniqueness, and its linkages to the social context of which it is a part” (Glesne, 2010, p.22). Additionally, one researcher’s case study inquiry can provide rich data and develop a foundation of language and theories upon which other researchers can build (Flyvbjerg, 2011). Further, educators may be able to apply findings from a case study inquiry to pedagogical practices due to the inclusion of rich contextual information. Flyvbjerg (2011) explains

that, “In a teaching situation, well-chosen case studies can help the student achieve competence, while context-independent facts and rules will bring the student just to the beginner’s level” (p. 303). Flyvbjerg suggests that the development of expertise largely depends on familiarity with thousands of cases.

The main disadvantage of case study inquiry is the focus on the single bounded system; researchers must examine multiple case studies to produce a composite of a larger group. Knowledge generated by a case study is not necessarily generalizable, but may transfer to the life of the reader, provide a powerful learning tool for the classroom, and indicate areas for further study. A case study can inform readers through evidence that the phenomena is false, an occurrence called falsification (Flyvbjerg, 2011).

### **Research Context**

In this investigation, I conducted a multiple case study at a shelter location, Hope Corporate (pseudonym), that provided emergency and transitional housing as well as various additional services to assist families experiencing homelessness. Children in this study attended Hope Corporate’s child-care program – Kids Club – that provided services after school during the school year and during the day when school classes were not in session. The Kids Club program functioned as a bounded system within which participants were selected based on their willingness to participate in this study. All children in this study were experiencing homelessness at the time of the study and were residing in the Hope Corporate facility and participating in the Kids Club activities. In this inquiry, I utilized a multiple case study to compensate for the short duration of

interactions with children due to their transience in the Hope Corporate community.

Further details about the setting and participants are provided below.

### **Research Design Overview**

Prior to beginning this investigation, I conducted a pilot study to test questions and potential data gathering approaches. On a specified day, I hosted two music station options during the Kids Club free time in which children could choose their activities. One station was singing with a karaoke machine to foster music engagement. The second station, located at the craft table, invited children to create their own collages about music in their lives. I used questioning techniques to elicit descriptions about their collages and asked follow-up questions about the music in their lives. From these experiences, I gained both information about the children and strategies for better communication. For example, I displayed a written explanation of the collage project but none of the children wanted to read the explanation. As a result, in subsequent activities, I replaced written directions with use of verbal directions when directions were needed, and I planned hands-on music activities with a low barrier to music making or creating.

Next, I procured approval from my committee and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) to proceed further. Throughout the approval process, I continued to volunteer in the child-care program to build relationships with potential participants. Once approval was granted, I proceeded with participant recruitment and field work. In general, the research process included:

1. Providing a variety of music activities for small group participation and learning station (e.g. instruments at the shelter, iPad with music software, and karaoke machine that I provided).
2. Observing children as they interacted with each other and joining children in activities as a participant-observer in both activities that I brought (e.g. iPad, karaoke machine) and activities created by Kids Club staff (e.g. homework supervision, dance class, cooking, water play, lunch and snacks, talent show, and special events).
3. Making field notes during and after observation-participation experiences.
4. Inviting children to participate in the study and securing both child assent and parental consent for study participation.
5. Interviews with each child separately and interviews with the child's parents, whenever possible.
6. Member checks with children and parents to clarify content in their interviews, whenever possible.
7. Adjustments to my approach based on observations and participation, notes, and experiences as the study progressed.

These research processes are described further below.

### **Participant selection.**

Qualitative researchers seek to understand the meaning of a particular experience through the selection of *participants* who guide the study and contribute to the process of both data generation and analysis. The goal of participant selection is to “purposefully

select participants or sites (or documents or visual materials) that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (Creswell, 2009, p. 178).

Maxwell (2013) uses the term *purposeful selection* (from Light et al., 1990, p. 53) to describe the process of choosing participants based on their potential to help the researcher understand the problem. Maxwell (2009, p. 98) articulates five possible aspects of participant selection that factor in the process:

- Locations or settings that are representative or typical.
- Setting or participants that provide heterogeneity for study.
- Participants whose experiences can help the researcher test theories
- Participants who allow for multiple comparisons.
- Participants with whom the researcher can establish a relationship appropriate for the study.

Of Maxwell’s five possible aspects of participant selection, the last was particularly crucial for this study: participants with whom I could most likely establish a relationship and who could inform my query into children, music, and homelessness. In this study, I focused on the musical lives of children *currently* experiencing homelessness. While over a million children in American public schools experience homelessness every year (NCHE, 2015), they do not necessarily experience homelessness at the same time (they may be in and out of housing situations) or in the same ways (some may be “doubled up” with relatives while others may be living in shelters or in cars). The challenges of transience and place informed my approach to participant



selection. I decided to focus on children currently experiencing homelessness and living in a designated shelter in order to narrow the focus on the study.

Other music researchers have focused on adults or teenagers experiencing homelessness (Fairchild, Thompson & McFerran, 2016; Staum, 1993; Staum & Brotons, 1995; Woelfer & Lee, 2012). I limited selection of participants to children ages 8 to 12 due to my background in elementary music - as well as my own comfort level with children this age. Additionally, during my first experience as a shelter volunteer, the staff at Hope Corporate advised that I should not volunteer to help with the youth older than 12 unless I could commit to volunteering consistently, as the youth were more susceptible to feelings of rejection if volunteers could not come regularly.

Child linguistic development also provided a parameter for participant selection. After volunteering, I found children ages 8 to 12 were able to converse more easily than younger children. Still, when I first volunteered at Hope Corporate, the after-school care teacher, Ms. Valerie, advised that I needed to help even the older children develop social and language skills with adults through gestures such as shaking their hands and having conversations. This phenomenon of language development delays, and Ms. Valerie's request, aligned with research that identified delayed verbal skill acquisition in children experiencing homelessness (Rescorla, Parker, & Stolley, 1991).

The child's ability to speak English provided an additional parameter for participant selection. All of the children I met at the shelter attended a primarily English-speaking school and conversed easily in English. I interacted with one child whose first language was a Baltic language, but he did not choose to participate in any music

activities and in the end did not participate in the study. While I provided recruitment materials in Spanish, all parents requested materials in English.

While I sought participants who identified with a variety of ethnicities and genders, pragmatically, I selected participants based on availability and willingness to engage in dialogue rather than sole use of demographic characteristics to guide selection. Children who participated in music activities provided in the Kids Club during free time were the most receptive to participation in this study. Likewise, parent availability rather than parent diversity factored in participant selection. Population transience meant accepting that some cases provided opportunity to include more detail than others. Population transience also meant that some participants might volunteer but then move before we could have an interview conversation.

**Site selection.**

Naturalistic inquiry conducted in the “normal” setting for the participants supports the goals of qualitative research design (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researcher cannot understand the multiple realities reported by the participants divorced from the context in which the participants perceived their own meanings. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest that the context provides critical data on where meaning is derived and how meaning evolves:

...because of the belief in complex mutual shaping rather than linear causation, which suggests that the phenomenon must be studied in its full-scale influence (force) field; and because contextual value structures are at least partly determinative of what will be found. (p. 39).

By government definition, children experiencing homelessness live in a residence that is insufficient, such as a motel, trailer, tent, under a bridge, temporary shelter, or “doubled up” with family and friends (McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. 11434a (2) Section 725(2)). Additionally, children experience homelessness if they move more than four times within a year. Early on, I considered a research study that examined the lives of children in public schools experiencing homelessness due to the numerous accounts of teachers who had shared stories of students in their classrooms (Researcher journal, November 6, 2014). Instead, I chose to conduct field work at a non-profit shelter for families for two reasons. First, the shelter provided some means of identifying participants who were experiencing homelessness at approximately the same time and who were housed temporarily in the same way at the time of the study. Second, the shelter provided a place of protection for both participants and myself due to the organizational infrastructure that created a physical and emotional safe place both for the participants and myself as we interacted with each other.

I considered three site locations that provided emergency or temporary shelter to families and facilitated on-site after-school programs for children. I refined locations based on practical considerations of space, schedule, geographic location, and potential for recruitment. Even though I examined multiple locations, only one location, Hope Corporate, consistently provided after-school care for children and responded to my requests to conduct a study on site.

### *Hope Corporate*

Hope Corporate, the field work location, was established decades ago by a religious organization and is the largest shelter for families experiencing homelessness in the state in which I conducted this study. At the time of this study, Hope Corporate provided emergency shelter, transitional housing, and assisted families with procurement of permanent housing. Hope Corporate had 300 affordable housing units in the area and provided for 170 families every night. The Hope Corporate website included a photo gallery, videos of their success stories, a section for blog/press releases, information that explained onsite job opportunities and services to the community including a café, catering company, and food market, and other job training programs. The website also provided information about various programs, including some specifically designed to aid veterans.

Hope Corporate is in an urban location. A few apartment buildings with a pleasant appearance were located directly opposite the shelter. Hope Corporate is a gated community on a busy four-lane street in a mostly commercial area. Every non-resident person must push a button, state their name and purpose, and sign in at the front desk which utilizes both permanent staff and residents who work temporarily at this location. Upon entering the main door, an open foyer functions as a hub to the café, cafeteria, meeting rooms, administrative offices, and a landscaped courtyard with a chapel in the middle and surrounded by the housing units in which families reside.

The staff at Hope Corporate is comprised of both paid employees and volunteer assistance, including a Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial Officer, Chief

Development Officer (fundraising), and Chief Operations Officer, as well as multiple full and part-time staff that provide support as social workers, food preparation, child care, etc. Kathryn, the volunteer coordinator at the beginning of the study and Valerie, the lead teacher for the after-school care program, initially granted permission for this study.<sup>10</sup> Because Hope Corporate staff and residents had previously collaborated multiple times with other researchers to complete projects, both Kathryn and Valerie shared specific ideas about project parameters, what would work the best, and how to most effectively safeguard the privacy of their clients. Kathryn and Valerie were business-like and set up specific dates for me to be present on campus. Kathryn also offered to publish handouts or other materials needed for the project. Valerie encouraged me to visit ahead of time and agreed to promote the music project with the children.

### **Overview of Information Needed**

This study explored the musical lives of nine children experiencing homelessness and the relationships that evidenced in their lives through their music. This investigation sought answers to research questions about both the content and context of their musical lives. I sought information aligned with the four possible categories delineated by Bloomberg and Volpe (2008): (a) contextual, (b) perceptual, (c) demographic, and (d) theoretical, which in this multiple case study included:

- Characteristics of people living in a shelter and how Hope Corporate fostered a safe and supportive environment for music engagement

<sup>10</sup> All adults were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity and the location of the shelter site.

- Children’s perceptions of the content, context, and perceived benefits of the music and various musical activities they encountered, and connections to other people and stories in their live.
- Demographic information about the participants including age, gender, ethnicity, and duration of stay in the shelter.
- Literature to inform study design, data generation, and interpretation.

### **Data generation: Perspectives on lived experiences**

#### ***Pilot project.***

In September 2016, I conducted a pilot project at Hope Corporate in order to field test data generation strategies, including interview conversation questions. I took a karaoke machine to the facility and allowed children to use the karaoke machine to generate excitement about “Music Time.” On previous occasions when I volunteered, children were enthusiastic about performing music in this way but did not have a karaoke machine or microphone. I also took materials for children to make a collage about the music in their lives. I provided various prompts, along with craft materials, to encourage children to talk about music in their lives. I then followed up with conversations with the children, using their art as a prompt.

The participants during the pilot project indicated a need for adaptation of multiple strategies I used in the main study. For example, I needed more guidance to ask open-ended questions that could answer questions about music in the lives of the participants. I adapted questions from Campbell’s list based on investigative sentence starters (i.e. Who? What? When? Where? Why? How?). Use of simpler questions

appeared to elicit more definitive answers. Additionally, during the pilot project, I found that children eagerly used the karaoke machine. Based on this experience, I decided to continue using a karaoke machine and an iPad with music applications, as well as the limited instruments (e.g. keyboard and small percussion) at the shelter.

Children also created music collages using mostly stickers and glitter glue. I needed to assist children with much of the language writing that occurred. Children talked sparingly about their music background. Some may have been reluctant to talk to someone new or reticent to talk about personal lives. Use of instrument and music-related stickers and other instrument and music-related pictures helped remove barriers of technical instrument terminology.

***Process of data generation.***

Use of sources from multiple perspectives and prolonged engagement with participants helps the researcher establish trustworthiness in the research process and resulting findings (Creswell, 2013). Data generated from multiple sources develops a more complex picture of the multiple realities encountered by participants. Creswell (2013) suggests, “Evidence of multiple realities includes the use of multiple forms of evidence in themes using the actual words of different individuals and presenting different perspectives” (p. 20).

In this study, data were generated with children who were the primary participants, and with their parents and shelter staff who were secondary participants. Data generation with other secondary participants (e.g. school teachers, church members, other family members, etc.) was not possible due to issues of privacy and ethics in

working with children of a vulnerable status. Data were generated in multiple ways including observation and participation with the children in Kids Club activities, interviews with participants, recorded music created by participants, photographs of the Kids Club facility, field notes, and use of a researcher journal.

In order to create a space for data generation, I served as a volunteer in Kids Club, the after-school care program. I brought various music activities with me to provide a rationale for my visit and to provide resources for children who lived at Hope Corporate. Suggestions from the literature (Seltser & Miller, 1993) about how to facilitate the reclamation of dignity for people experiencing homelessness informed project development.

Specifically, I intentionally considered autonomy, predictability, self-expression, and social solidarity in the design of music activities and data generation engagements. Music activities remained consistent with the established norms of the setting. Children chose to engage, or not engage, in music activities, which allowed for autonomy. Music activities were familiar to children and there was an organized procedure for participation which reinforced predictability. Children expressed themselves through music and artwork and had multiple opportunities for self-expression when they talked with me. Music activities may have helped build community as children shared in mutually supportive experiences common to children's social practices. Data were gathered in three primary ways throughout my tenure as a volunteer: observations, artifacts, interview conversations with participants, and use of a researcher journal.



### *Observations.*

Observations help me gather information about the general context and focus on particular participants. In this study, I documented both the activities and actions of children and the products the children produced (iMaschine recording, song recording, etc.) I observed children during engagement in music making and creating activities during their normal after-school care program located in a family shelter. At times informal interviews, or unstructured conversations, became part of these observations (Hatch, 2002, p. 92-93). Due to privacy concerns, I could not video record observations or interviews. If I did procure consent to record from children and parents, the consent was to audio record observations and interviews for analysis purposes only. In order to minimize distractions, I made notes using my iPhone throughout observations. No child ever asked to play with my iPhone while I was making notes.

Children were invited to engage in musical activities in a variety of ways, and I documented these as part of the observation-participation sessions. They sang songs using the karaoke machine, created recordings on Garage Band, made “beats” using the iPad application “iMaschine,” explored sound through Morton Subotnik’s “Pitch Painter,” and played the electric keyboard available at the shelter, as well as some small percussion instruments. I also periodically offered opportunities to make art collages about their music. The products they produced elicited an additional perspective into their musical lives.

I also documented music preferences. During karaoke sessions, I wrote down songs performed or requested by children. I observed and documented a few of the

videos they watched on YouTube at the Kids Club computer activity station. I also asked them to share their favorite YouTube channels. We looked them up on my phone together and I made screenshots of their choices. I also took screenshots of the playlist used during the dance segment of special family nights such as a “Friendship Dance” to celebrate Valentine’s Day and a Mother’s Day event.

Overall, I volunteered at Hope Corporate in Kids Club over 45 times between August 2016 and July 2017. During the school year, I often visited on Thursdays because other volunteers came on Friday afternoons. I helped with snack and homework time, and then facilitated music activity stations in addition to other play according to interests of the child until their parents picked them up by 5:30 p.m. During the summer, I arrived at Hope Corporate around 9:30 a.m. and played and/or conducted interviews and sometimes stayed to eat lunch with the children where I gathered data on rhymes and songs the children liked to perform together. More than once, following lunch I took a nap with the children. I slept on the couch with my blanket, with the children scattered around the room on the floor with their own pillows and blankets. A few interviews occurred after nap time before afternoon free time activities had begun.

I also attended various events hosted by the child-care staff to support family connections: a “Friendship Dance” in celebration of Valentine’s Day, a “Mother’s Day Tea,” and a “Hopes and Dreams Gala” which was the last day of my field work. I was known by the children as “The Karaoke Lady” for a long time and as “Ms. Corrie” by the end of my tenure. In fact, when a child responded harshly when I asked him to do something, another child admonished him, “We don’t talk like that to Ms. Corrie.”

In addition to recording notes on my iPhone during observations, I documented observations through use of a field log in which I provided details on observations (descriptive notes) and made initial analytical notes that informed later reflections (Glesne, 2011, p. 73-76). In this project, I used my iPhone to take notes during the observation to remain unobtrusive, as the children are more acclimated to adults using their smartphones in various capacities. Following field work sessions, I recorded initial reflections on a voice recorder which I expanded into more extensive field notes at a later time that included both pictures and typed text.

### *Artifacts.*

I created opportunities for children to respond in several ways to share their ideas, interests, and thoughts about music. For example, participants selected their favorite YouTube videos on my iPhone and took a screenshot of their selections. However, this process sometimes proved difficult due to the lack of internet access at the shelter. Additionally, participants created art collages about the music in their lives, and I documented what they created. They also created music on the iPad using apps such as iMaschine and Pitch Painter, and these creations served as artifacts for this study. I also took photos of the facility as part of the documentation for this study.

### *Interviews.*

Qualitative researchers may conduct both structured and semi-structured interviews in which the researcher guides the conversation using a particular set of questions during a time frame for the interview (Hatch, 2002, p. 94). Because this research was exploratory, I adapted the list of potential questions from interview

questions found in Appendix B of *Songs in Their Heads* (Campbell, 2010). I also asked questions to clarify or explore music and relationships based on responses from participants. I could not standardize the frequency or duration of interviews due to the housing transience of participants, their willingness to engage in conversation, and the need to develop rapport between participants and the researcher. I attempted to interview children two to four times for 15 minutes each session, and I talked with their parents as their schedules and willingness to interview permitted. The incidental conversations during observations became part of the interviewing process. I made transcriptions of all audio recordings, including interviews and field observations.

### **Reflexivity of Research**

In qualitative investigations, the researcher serves as the instrument through which data gathering occurs. Serving as the instrument of data gathering, the researcher must “position herself” in the study through communication of personal history, attitudes, and bias that may influence analysis. Glesne recommended that researchers continually ask reflective questions about the research process, reactions, and interactions through the use of a “field log” (Glesne, 2011, p. 151).

Reflexive thought assists in understanding ways in which the researcher’s personal characteristics, values, and positions interact with others in the research situation and how these may influence the methodological approach, the methods used, and the interpretations made. Reflexivity forces one to think more about how one wants to be in relation to research participants. Reflexive thinking can help the researcher make use of

personal passions and strengths while also better understanding the ways in which the knowledge produced is co-constructed and only partial (Glesne, 2011, p. 159).

Even though extensive self-reflection must occur, the researcher must maintain the focus of the study, which in this case lies in the meanings of the participants. A cyclical process occurs as the researcher considers the participants' multiple perspectives, reflects on her own thinking, and then re-considers realities shared by participants. Through continuous analysis of the data and self-reflection, the researcher develops a process that evolves throughout the study. Because the researcher in a qualitative study is a human being (not a mechanical or electrical tool) and the participants are human beings (not inanimate objects), the design is always emergent and dependent upon what emerges during data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

### **Researcher journal.**

I practiced reflexivity through use of a researcher journal, or a "research diary," in which I documented my thoughts, ideas, and emotions throughout the inquiry process (Glesne, 2011, p. 77). In my researcher journal, I discussed the rationale for various choices made throughout the research, as well as the emotions I experienced during the process of data gathering and analysis. Journaling allowed me to clarify and compartmentalize my observations and to remain focused on the task as well as inductively elucidate aspects of participants' realities. For example, after summarizing a study for the literature review, I wrote "So sad after writing the Walsh entry in the literature review - a little down. (Researcher journal, April 22, 2015). During data generation, I wrote notes about my process and how to improve it, such as, "I am getting

better at asking questions but am still apprehensive about being able to think of the best questions on the spot. . . Perhaps a questions flowchart would help. (Researcher journal, October 24, 2016).” I used my journal to keep track of questions that arose:

Most [kids] were very excited about playing music but had not access to music [meaning a music class]. Some had a music class - others did not have access to anything. No band or chorus opportunities. I wonder if it was because there was nothing at school or if the child was precluded from participation due to some kind of technicality. (Researcher journal, October 24, 2016).

I also noted when my own biases emerged:

I am finding I have to constantly fight against seeing children who are experiencing homelessness from a deficit perspective. Yesterday, I was wondering how Valerie does this job year after year - same place, kids transient - she may never see them again once they leave (Researcher journal, October 29, 2016).

### **Ethics, confidentiality and disclosure.**

This study aligned with professional standards for ethics and confidentiality and received approval from the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at Arizona State University. Due to the vulnerable status of children experiencing homelessness, I considered various issues of privacy and agency necessary to ensure children’s protection from harm. Families experiencing homelessness often leave their homes due to episodes of family violence or another traumatic event. Managers at the shelter indicated

concerned about protecting the privacy and anonymity of the families who resided in their community.

I recruited participants through selection of children who participated in music activities during an after-school care program at a temporary shelter. I provided all prospective participants with appropriate consent forms signed by both the parent and the child. I only retained observation data for participants who signed and returned consent forms. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and still participate in music activities.

I used pseudonyms for the shelter site, the after-school care program, and participants. In order to foster participant ownership of our study, I invited both child and adult participants to create their own pseudonyms, if they chose to do so. All non-digital data were stored in a secure file in a locked room. Any electronic data were stored on a dedicated computer with password-only accessibility.

### **Limitations of the study.**

Gaps in the research evidenced due to the realities of the lives of the children and to the limitations of the research process. The main participants were children and their responses were subject to the inclinations and interests that at times benefited the study at other times proved a challenge to data generation. At times, children wanted to sit down and have all of my attention focused on them. On a different day, or later in the day, children preferred to work with other children or independently on the iPad and did not want me or other adults to interrupt.

The lives of the children were transient, and their recollections of events were framed by their own perspectives and memories, which included separation from loved ones and difficult moments. Verification became problematic. Multiple times, I intended to follow up with deeper questions at a later time or on another day, and by the time I returned to the shelter, the child had moved to another location. Other factors influenced the data generation process, such as limitations on potential questions due to the vulnerable status of the children. My own role in bringing music to the shelter and how individual children related to me could also have affected the stories they shared. Akin to a piece of swiss cheese, holes in the data generation are apparent throughout. Still, the stories become woven together, connected by music experiences and relationships with others, allowing a means to develop a more realistically complex representation of the musical lives of these children via the lens of the ecological systems theory (Denzin, 1994).

Limitations in the theoretical framework also informed the study and are discussed later in this chapter. Briefly, Bronfenbrenner's original depiction of the ecological systems theory focused on interactions within a specific geographical place, whereas Neal and Neal's (2013) illustration and revision of Bronfenbrenner emerges from common relationships in discrete microsystem networks evidenced by the child's interactions with others. Use of Neal and Neal's revision allowed for incorporation of a personal network that could recognize the connection to virtual media evidenced by the children in this study. More importantly, investigation based on relationship networks, per Neal and Neal, rather than a physical place as illustrated in Bronfenbrenner's original



work allowed for continuity of analysis throughout the fractured trajectory of the children's lived experience.

### **Issues of trustworthiness.**

In any qualitative study, the reader demands a level of trustworthiness of the narrative based on the credibility, dependability, and transferability of the findings (Guba & Lincoln, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Throughout this study, I assumed that children are all musical regardless of observed music achievement or interactions. I offered all children options to engage in music activities. I invited all children who were willing to interact with me opportunities to participate in this study regardless of whether they joined in music activities.

Earlier in my experience at Hope Corporate, I believed that parents of children who lived at the shelter neglected or were apathetic towards their children which resulted in children's errant behavior choices. This is a type of deficit thinking well documented in the literature (Kim, 2012; Pickles, 2014). What I observed during my experiences at Hope Corporate, were parents who worked very hard at full-time jobs, were burdened by the responsibility of multiple children, faced health challenges, or were overcoming substance abuse. Knowing the stresses of parenting during homelessness and the importance of the parent-child relationship, the staff of the Kids Club at Hope Corporate designed activities and events to foster greater connections between parents and their children in a safe and secure environment. Parents demonstrated pride in their children's accomplishments when they made video recording of performances using their smart

phones and often spoke of their dreams for their children's musical lives and hoped they could support their children in future endeavors.

Earlier in my experience, I also wondered if the children in Kids Club were "just like other children" or if there were inherent issues due to the experience of poverty and homelessness. Initially, I was apprehensive of potential volatile behavior and my ability to connect with the children due to trauma they had encountered. In some ways, I did find the ability to make connections difficult and Ms. Valerie admonished me that the children needed to learn how to have conversations with adults. I should adjust *my* thinking.

Throughout the process and as I grew comfortable in the setting, children begged me to talk with them or wanted me to have lunch with them or play with them, or, alternatively wanted to do their own thing either with a specific activity or create using the music tools I provided but without help.

In the study, use of member checking or similar ways of enhancing dependability of the research process proved challenging. I was able to interview parents of five of nine participants who verified or provided clarification of their children's accounts of their musical lives. On one occasion, I reviewed the child and parent's transcript with a parent, and they were able to check the content and clarify areas of misunderstanding. Other than these opportunities, member checking was limited.

Peer review shaped the writing and analysis of this document. Colleagues read portions of the document and provided comments and questions that informed resulting description and analysis. Other conversations helped me identify areas of needed synthesis in the analysis and writing.

### **The researcher as an instrument.**

I am a music educator with experience in the areas of elementary and secondary general music, secondary choral ensemble, college teaching, and private instruction. Raised both in the midwestern and southern United States, I currently live in the American southwest. Throughout my life, I have consistently participated in various initiatives to serve others in need of help.

In the fall of 2013, I volunteered in the after-school care located at Hope Corporate and tried to teach children to play the piano and chaperoned a field trip to the state fair. When I volunteered in 2013, I was apprehensive about potential outbursts and hesitant about how to relate to children who, at times, struggled with interpersonal skills. I also felt burdened and weighed down over the gravity of potentially doing research in this setting.

After teaching for two years in various capacities, including in an urban Montessori school and a low-income Title 1 school, I returned to the shelter in Fall of 2016 more confident and comfortable interacting with the children who participated in the shelter's after-school care. I also sensed an increased capability to identify my emotional responses to interactions with children, critically address bias in my interpretations, and compartmentalize experiences from other areas of my life. Since I had previously established relationships with shelter personnel, I was a known entity to them, and they supported the project from the beginning.

I struggled with my own rationale for this exploration and how this study related to music education. I concluded that over 1.3 million children in American schools

experiencing homelessness was too many children to ignore. Most of my colleagues seemed unaware about children, homelessness, and mandates of federal legislation. When I sat through professional development for teachers about the *McKinney-Vento Act*, I felt the weight of “one more thing” pressing down on me while also struggling over my role in the music classroom. I concluded that this study provides more than a mandate of one more expectation or accommodation required from the teacher. This study provides the child’s perspective of their music both inside and outside of the classroom, and the child’s perspective, that can help educators and other music professionals foster music connections that can change the future lives of children experiencing homelessness.

**Researcher role.**

In this study, I hosted music activities at a shelter site in which children could engage in music making and conversations about their musical lives. Initially, I contacted the shelter staff and procured instruments and materials for music activities. I observed children when they engaged in music activities and participated in music and non-music activities with them. From those in attendance, I invited children to talk with me further about the music in their lives. I procured necessary permission forms, conducted interviews with children and parents about music in their lives, and analyzed generated data.

I attempted to position myself as a collaborative music maker and activity partner, and I joined with children in singing karaoke and engaging in other activities such as board games and playing with dolls. Sometimes, children also wanted me to take on an advisory role in which I taught them songs on the keyboard or helped them with skits. At

other times I became an observer and supporter, such as an audience member for their talent show. The children indicated the role they wanted me to play in their music making, whether it was the role of a provider, co-performer, teacher, or audience member. My position as an adult helper likely influenced positively and negatively both our personal connections and the resulting stories.

### **Data Analysis Overview**

Data analysis began through transcription and analysis of recordings and compilation of field notes, which occurred throughout the research process. I used generated data and the researcher journal to create memos and conduct thematic analysis of narrative data. (Maxwell, 2013, p. 105). Housing mobility affected the data collection and analysis process. In “typical” case study research, once the researcher completes the data collection process, the researcher looks for commonalities and differences between individual cases to elucidate consistent threads between the cases, or the lack thereof (Maxwell, 2013, p. 108). Due to the wide variety of responses and with a view to the research questions of the study, I determined that categories needed to align with organization of potential social networks. I utilized the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory to frame analysis.

#### **Urie Bronfenbrenner and the ecological systems theory.**

Urie Bronfenbrenner was a leader in the field of developmental psychology, human ecology, and children during the twentieth century (American Psychologist, 2006). Born in Moscow in 1917, Bronfenbrenner immigrated to the United States when he was only six years old (American Psychologist, 1988; Ceci, 2006). Following graduate

work at Harvard University and the University of Michigan, Bronfenbrenner was a psychologist for the U.S. military and evaluated potential recruits for the secret service during WWII (Bronfenbrenner, 1977).

Bronfenbrenner developed theoretical models for research, integrated policy and practice, and produced multiple publications for both the private and public sector. Bronfenbrenner advocated for health development for the American family through his research and was instrumental in starting the Head Start program for young children from a low socio-economic background (Ceci, 2006). He received multiple honorary doctoral degrees from European universities, as well as numerous awards from the American Psychological society, including the James McKeen Cattell Award for Lifetime Contribution. In honor of his multiple years on the Cornell University faculty, the organization renamed their Life Course Institute the Bronfenbrenner Life Course Institute.

Multiple experts in the fields of philosophy, psychology, sociology, education, and anthropology active in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century informed the development of Bronfenbrenner's thinking (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), including Edmund Husserl (phenomenology), Wolfgang Köhler (Gestalt psychology), David Katz (gesture), and George Herbert Mead (symbolic interactionism). Another important influence came from sociologists Dorothy Swaine Thomas and her husband William I. Thomas who developed what they called the Thomas Theorem to addresses issues of perception and reality, stating "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas, 1928, p. 572). Other influences included Harry Stack Sullivan (psychopathology) and

Ralph Linton and Ruth Benedict at Columbia University (anthropology) who proposed that environment played the largest role in human development.

Ideas from John Dewey, progressive education, and Piaget's publication, *Construction of Reality in the Child (1957)* also informed Bronfenbrenner's thinking. In a critique of Piaget, Bronfenbrenner opines that Piagetian analysis identified development separate from the context in which the child developed which continually evolved (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Researchers needed to observe similar interactions in various settings to sufficiently understand child development.

While all of the above individuals contributed to the evolution of Bronfenbrenner's theories, ideas from Kurt Lewin greatly influenced the development of his ecological systems theoretical model. As a graduate student, Bronfenbrenner shared that his professor tasked him to write about Lewin. At the time, Bronfenbrenner asserted that Lewin was a "fuzzy thinker" who could not make his ideas practically viable (2005/1977, p. 42). His professor at the time, Frank S. Freeman, wrote a note on his paper saying, "You judge too quickly; someday you may change your mind" (2005/1977, p. 42). Upon extensive interaction with Lewin during WWII, Bronfenbrenner (2005/1977) did alter his initial assessment of Lewin's work.

Lewin described the difference between process and perception in the following way. The classical theoretical or Aristotelian approach categorizes phenomena into four categories based on the elements: earth, air, fire, and water. Lewin expands study of phenomena to focus on the specific processes that produce the phenomena using a field-theoretical or Galilean paradigm that focuses on a relative perspective. Even more than

the process, Lewin sought to understand the perception of the person behind the process. Lewin proposed that an environment exists in the way it is perceived by the mind of an individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Lewin's first published work *Landscape of War* (1917) illustrated how the environment influences how the individual perceives the environment. Lewin described the setting of a farmhouse on a hill surrounded by fields and forest. Initially, an observer imagines pictures of a peaceful countryside. Once the setting becomes a battlefield, however, initial images develop into a darker reality with the hilltop perceived as an observation post, the sheltered side of the hill an ideal place to establish a station for battle, and trees a dangerous camouflage for enemy combatants.

Lewin advocated the "primacy of the phenomenological over the real environment in steering behavior" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 24). He also applied topology from mathematics to the study of human perception, developing "topological territories" (1979, p. 9) that were "nested and interconnected structures" (2005/1977, p. 45). Lewin formed his ideas under the assumptions of the Gestalt tradition of psychology in which the whole is greater than each individual part. In order to illustrate the relationship between the parts that comprise the whole picture, Lewin (Bronfenbrenner, 2005/1992, p. 108) created a formula of interaction between an individual person, an environment, and resulting behavior:  $B=f(PE)$ . This formula indicates that the environment and the individual person combine to result in a particular behavior. Bronfenbrenner (2005/1992) substituted the element of behavior with development in his



own formula to depict the role of the individual person and environment in development:  $D=f(PE)$ . According to Bronfenbrenner,

Particular environmental conditions have been shown to produce different developmental consequences depending on the personal characteristics of individuals living in that environment. It was this kind of person-environment interaction that Lewin envisioned in his original formulation. (2005/1992, p. 109).

Bronfenbrenner's dissertation on sociometry provided an early indication of his interest in the dynamics of interpersonal interactions in that characteristics of individuals directly affected the formation and nature of the group. Sociometry is "a method for discovering, describing and evaluating social status, structure, and development through estimating the degree of acceptance or rejection between individuals in groups" (2005/1942, p. 23). In his dissertation, Bronfenbrenner considered "the frequency, strength, pattern, and basis of the interrelationships which bind the group together and give it distinctive character" (2005/1942, p. 22). He also developed a sociometric test to analyze the social status and structure within an organizational group, focusing on the individual and not on the evaluation instrument. Throughout his career, Bronfenbrenner developed a research design to account for two largely ignored aspects of a child's experience: the influence of multiple environments and how the subject perceives those multiple environments.

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory categorizes areas of the ecological environment that influences development of the individual. While in earlier iterations, Bronfenbrenner referred to it an ecological model, in later revisions he labels it as a bio-

ecological model in order to include bio-psychological phenomena experienced by both individuals and groups over extended periods of time (2005/1942). Bronfenbrenner described the ecological model as a set of Russian nesting dolls. More specifically, the ecological environment is “a nested arrangement of concentric structures, each contained within the next micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22).

Instead of merely describing social and cultural groups, Bronfenbrenner combined social psychology and social anthropology to examine human development within the network of a particular social system that includes the influence of biological, social, and cultural factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 12). A researcher using this model not only evaluates the influence of the ecological context on the development of children, but also how children affect their immediate environment and broader culture. In *The Ecology of Human Development* (1979), Bronfenbrenner outlines the essence of ecological study of human development:

The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts in which the settings are embedded. (p. 21)

Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasizes three critical assumptions of his definition of ecological study of human development. First, the human person is not a “blank slate”; rather, the human person is a “growing, dynamic entity that progressively moves into and restructures the milieu in which it resides” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 21). The second

assumption is the existence of reciprocity – what Bronfenbrenner calls the “process of mutual accommodation” between the environment and the human (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). The final assumption is the existence of interconnections between settings that influence development. For example, changes at all four levels of the environment (described below) may alter meanings and roles at the immediate level (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 54).

### *Microsystems.*

The microsystem refers to the “complex of interrelations within the immediate setting” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 10) and is comprised of three elements: activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships (p. 11). Bronfenbrenner defines a role as “a set of activities and relations expected of a person occupying a particular position in society, and of others in relation to that person” (p. 85). The microsystem includes the child’s perception of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations that exist in a particular setting in which individuals engage in face-to-face interactions. For a child, a microsystem might occur in a school, day care center, home, playground, or another setting. Bronfenbrenner used the word “experienced” to focus on how the individual or subject perceives activities, roles, and interpersonal relations in a specific environment. Bronfenbrenner defined experience as the “objective qualities of an environment as well as how the environment is perceived by the person” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005/2001, p. 5) and, in later writing, as subjective feelings that continue through life in the relationship between self and others (2005/2001).

### *Proximal processes and time.*

Bronfenbrenner explains that *proximal processes* are the “primary engines of development” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005/2001, p. 6) that drive human formation. *Proximal processes* refer to activities that continue over an extended period of time. Examples include feeding a baby, playing with a child, solitary play, and athletic activities. Proximal processes combine with characteristics of the developing person (i.e. genetics, abilities, etc.), the environment, and the time frame in which development occurs (Bronfenbrenner, 2005/2001, p. 6).

In the ecological systems theory, proximal processes are reciprocal interaction between the environment, the individual, other people, objects, and symbols (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Proximal processes are not simply the unidirectional effects of environments doing things to people but include the bi-directional relationships between individuals in a particular context, as well as the interactions between the individual and objects or symbols that construct the context. The existence of other people in the immediate environment does not necessarily lead to proximal processes between the individual and other people. Bronfenbrenner and Morris (2006) explain that proximal processes are not necessarily discrete events but rather are recurring and may vary in degrees of complexity and meaning.

Time is a critical factor in the development of the child who needs to participate in activities with another individual, usually the caregiver, that becomes increasingly complex. Effective proximal processes may be part of a sequence that repeats over time (Griffore & Phenice, 2016). Over time and through repetition, the child develops a close attachment with the caregiver and internalizes the person's activities and affection

(Bronfenbrenner, 2005/2001, p. 9). Internalization provides motivation for engagement in similar activities. The existence of a third party who supports and engenders respect for the caregiver can greatly enhance the progression of development of a child

(Bronfenbrenner 2005/2001, p. 10). Proximal process form through mutual engagement in molar activities, described below.

*Activities in a Microsystem.*

In every microsystem, people engage in two types of activities: molar activities and molecular activities. Activities that are “short-lived” or momentary are *molecular* behaviors. Some molecular activities may occur frequently over a long period of time, but they do not have personal meaning for the individual, such as a knock on a door or getting dressed for the day. Molar activities are those that lead to ongoing behavior full of intentionality and that have meaning for the participants. Often molar activities are conducted to accomplish a particular goal; most are ongoing processes. Bronfenbrenner elucidates, “All molar activities are forms of behavior, but not all behaviors are forms of molar activity” (1979, p. 45).

For example, an individual’s completion of household chores could be a molecular activity if the only goal was the completion of an action. However, an individual could also complete household chores as a molar activity if cleaning embodies additional meaning such as doing chores in anticipation of an eagerly-awaited event such as a holiday celebration or caring for another individual within the microsystem. On a normal day, getting dressed may be a molecular activity. However, getting dressed for a

special event, such as a birthday party or school dance, may be transformed into a molar activity through meaning ascribed to the event.

In this study of children, music, and homelessness, identification of molar and molecular music activities could help gauge the level of meaning of various forms of musical engagement in the lives of the participants. For instance, a child may casually listen to songs on the radio that friends or parents listen to which could be a molecular activity. During music engagement that constitutes a molar activity, a child might listen to a particular song over and over, or state that the song reminds them of an important person, implying that the song has a deeper meaning for the child than a casual encounter.

*Social networks in a microsystem.*

In Bronfenbrenner's model, two individuals who consistently interact with each other form a *dyad*: "A dyad is formed whenever two persons pay attention to or participate in one another's activities" (1979, p. 56). While different types of dyads may form through molar activities and proximal processes, all dyads have some commonalities. Reciprocity exists between the two individuals in which actions of each individual affect the other through mutual feedback which provides momentum for growth (1979, p. 65). A *primary dyad* forms when the child perceives a connection whether or not the other individual is physically present, "A primary dyad is one that continues to exist phenomenologically for both participants even when they are not together" (1979, p. 58). An *observational dyad* develops when one individual pays close attention to another person (e.g. a child watches a parent cook a meal). In a *joint activity*

*dyad*, both individuals do things together. While they may not engage in the exact same actions, their activities are complimentary, such as when a parent reads picture books to a child. While the mother shares the story, the child often might name objects (1979, p. 56).

Bronfenbrenner suggests that the developing person demonstrates the most growth when power transfers from the more dominant individual to the developing person (1979, p. 57). Additionally, a dyadic relationship provides an *affective relation*, in which the longer the duration of the interaction, the more profound the influence (1979, p. 58).

Bronfenbrenner posits that all of the individual interactions in a particular setting contribute to development in addition to primary dyads. For example, in the examination of the mother-infant dyad, researchers need to include interactions with hospital staff, doctors, and social workers (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 67). Third parties may also alter the interactions between dyad members in what Bronfenbrenner describes as a *second-order effect* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 68).

In this study, adults' opinions about musical engagement sometimes correlated to the child's perception of music. If the adult advocated that particular hip-hop music was good or bad, the child shared that particular hip-hop music was bad. When the parent listened often to country music, the child articulated a preference for country music. The parent also facilitated access to music through listening on various devices and provided instruments or other support for music exploration.

A third party interaction manifests into either a *closed social network*, something greater than a dyad, or an *incomplete social network*. A closed social network occurs

when every member of the network interacts with every other member of the network. An incomplete social network describes a network in which potential dyadic relationships do not develop (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 81). Individuals can form dyads in a closed social network either in a single setting, such as an office, or across settings labeled as the mesosystem or exosystem and discussed later in this chapter.

In this study, a closed social network occurred between individuals in a family or between members of an ensemble. The field site location, Kids Club At Hope Corporate, functioned as a closed social network due to the fact that it was a contained environment where children interacted with each other to varying degrees. Children experiencing homelessness encountered severance of dyads within their music network connections due to housing transience.

*In the research setting.*

In studies in various cultural contexts Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggests that the researcher needs to first describe the setting in which the development occurs through documentation of differences in activities, social interactions, and other pertinent details of microsystems (1979, p. 69). Three elements in the formation of the microsystem indicate ecological differences: activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships. Most settings indicate variation in two main areas: molar activities and interpersonal relationships (1979, p. 183).

Bronfenbrenner hypothesizes that one could perceive the influence of a particular ecological setting on child development from the “variety of the molar activities engaged in by the child and in the changed character of his behavior and relations toward adults



and peers” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 201). The adult plays a critical role in the development of the child through the use of questioning, instructing, comforting, and praising (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 202, 204-205).

***Mesosystems.***

The development of an individual can occur through the influence of multiple microsystems. When microsystems combine, a *mesosystem* emerges that includes the variety of settings in which the developing person directly participates (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 7-8). A mesosystem, then is a “system of microsystems” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25). More specifically:

A mesosystem comprises the interrelations among two or more settings in which the developing person actively participates (such as for a child, the relations among home, school, and neighborhood peer group; for an adult, among family, work, and social life). (1979, p. 25).

*Primary links* evidence not only when the individual connects with others in a setting, but also through interactions with individuals who participate in more than one setting, in formal and informal communication between settings, and in the knowledge and perceptions of individuals about another setting. For example, Bronfenbrenner suggests that a child develops more effectively through responsible completion of tasks outside the home in which the child interacts with adults who are not the primary caregiver (1979, p. 282).

In a microsystem, molar activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships create dyads systems to a varied extent dependent upon the “degree of reciprocity, balance of

power, and affective relations” (Bronfenbrenner, p. 1979, p. 209). The mesosystem functions similarly to the microsystem, only instead of functioning within a single bounded system, the mesosystem identifies connections across multiple settings.

Four types of interconnections create the mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 210). First, participation in multiple settings creates a *direct social network* (e.g. day care and home). In the direct social network, a *primary link* is an individual, present in multiple settings, who assists the child with assimilation into new settings. A *supplementary link* emerges when a primary link participates in more than two settings that also involve the child. For instance, the parent and fellow church members might join the PTA or the teacher may facilitate an after-school group and visit the family at home. The *linking dyad* occurs when the child is in a dyadic relationship with an individual who functions as a primary or supplementary link.

Interconnection also evolves through *indirect linkage* which is a link between individuals in two different settings who may or may not have interacted with each other in the same settings. Indirectly linked individuals become part of a *second-order network*, a network that indirectly influences relationship connections. *Interesting communications* transpire when one side provides another side with essential information needed towards growth. Interesting communications could occur from one side to another or in both directions. As the final interconnection, *interesting knowledge* refers to information available about individuals in one setting that people communicate to individuals in another setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 209-210).

*Setting transitions and links.*

The first day in a new environment, the individual experiences *setting transition* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 209). The individual can function as his/her own *solitary* link that connects with others independent of additional assistance. In a *dual* link, another person helps to foster the link to new individuals for the child. For instance, if a child attends a new school, a parent or older sibling might go with the child and introduce him/her to others in the class (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 211). If more than one person is actively involved in both settings, the individual connects to others in multiple ways. If the relationship link does not continue after the initial link, then the individual was *weakly linked*.

*Joint activities to enhance development.*

The development of the child benefits from participation in multiple joint activities with various primary dyads, especially those with maturity or experience. Participation increases positive development when it occurs in multiple settings across cultural or subcultural boundaries that are unique to each other (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A *transcontextual dyad* is a two-person system that migrates from one setting to another. The more an individual participates in *transcontextual dyads*, the greater the capacity to develop from future experiences.

The linking person functions as a *supportive link* through engagement in mutual trust, positive attitude, goal setting, and power structure that transfers power to the developing person (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 214). The more supportive the links that occur between multiple settings (e.g. father visits day care, etc.), the greater the

development potential in the new setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 215). The impact of links between individuals depends on the individual perception of competence and previous experience.

Second-order social networks also foster links, including more indirect communication such as asking a friend for meeting information. Other networks develop to identify resources, such as when a person asks others to help him/her find a job. Also, links occur when individuals transmit information about one setting to an additional setting. For example, an educator could learn from others about parents' opinion of their teaching (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 215). With the emergence of the internet, second-order social networks have expanded to use of virtual media sources.

### *Exosystems.*

Bronfenbrenner asserted that an engagement is optimal when the balance of power in a relationship shifts towards the developing person. What about relationships and events that influenced the developing person but in which he/she had no direct interaction? These are events and relationships that comprise an exosystem. An exosystem consists of “one or more settings that do not involve the developing person as an active participant but in which events occur that affect, or are affected by, what happens in that setting” (Bronfenbrenner, 1970, p. 237).

Initially, the exosystem affects the setting or context of the microsystem in which the individual functions. Secondly, adjustments in the microsystem due to changes in the exosystem can influence the developing individual in his/her microsystem.

Reciprocally, the developing individual could interact with others in the microsystem in

such a way that prompts development in settings or contexts in which he/she does not have personal engagement. Most studies do not address influence in both directions but focus on influence in one direction—from exosystem to the individual’s microsystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 249). In this study, a school district might be a macrosystem that influences the development of the child.

***Macrosystems.***

Bronfenbrenner articulates that a *macrosystem* is the broadest interconnected system, an overarching pattern that encompasses aspects of ideologies, assumptions, and organizations of social institutions in a particular culture or subculture (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 8). Use of the macrosystem level in the theoretical framework allows the researcher to address the influence aspects of public policy and research on the development and connections for the child.

The *macrosystem* refers to consistencies, in the form and content of lower-order systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-) that exist, or could exist, at the level of the subculture or the culture as a whole, along with any belief systems or ideology underlying such consistencies. (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 258).

In a later publication, Bronfenbrenner expanded the definition:

The *macrosystem* consists of the overarching pattern of micro-, meso-, and exosystems characteristic of a given culture, subculture, or other extended social structure, *with particular reference to the developmentally instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options,*

*and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in such overarching systems.*

(Bronfenbrenner, 2005/1989, p. 101)

When referring to the macrosystem, the researcher considers the consistency inherent in a culture or subculture as well as the content of the other interconnected systems (micro-, meso-, and exo-), including underlying assumptions or beliefs in the particular culture. While there may be variety between various cultures and subcultures, some aspects consistently appear across cultures such as types of settings, transitions, microsystems (molar activities, roles, and interpersonal relationships), and connections between systems. Core values of individuals in a particular culture influence and inform all four levels of the conceptual framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 261).

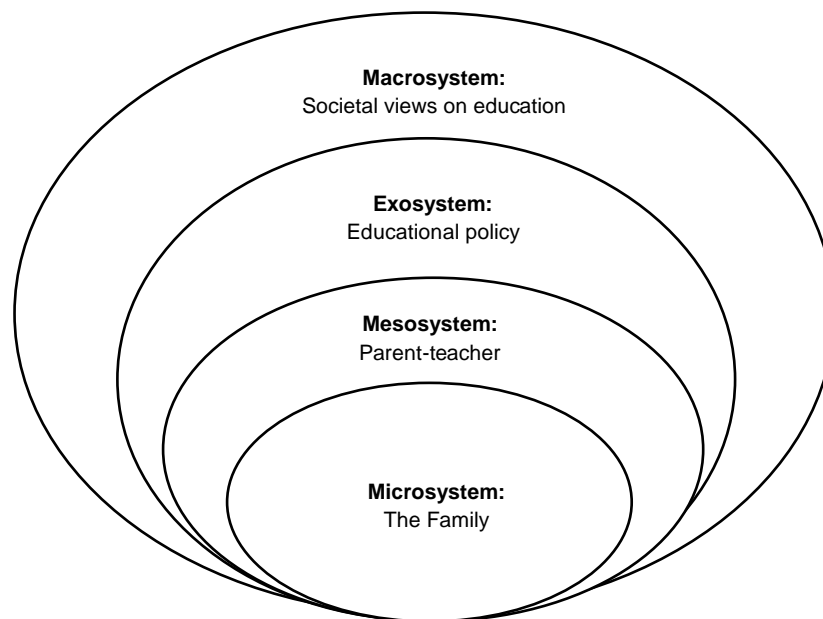


Figure 3.1. Ecological Systems Theory model depicted by Urie Bronfenbrenner (1979).

### **Critique of the ecological systems theory**

Darling (2007), a student of Bronfenbrenner, analyzed texts published over six decades to develop a deeper understanding of his work. Darling concluded that during earlier phases of his work, Bronfenbrenner focused attention on context and ecological validity of research in a natural setting; however, later publications recognize the variety of influences on the actions and development of the child. Models used in multiple textbooks on child development often focus on the contextual aspects of Bronfenbrenner's work and depict concentric circles of influence with a passive child in the center. Such models imply that actions and development of the child are determined by external influences, without consideration of the agency of the child. Darling (2007) proposes that later evolutions of Bronfenbrenner's work focus on the agency of the person in the center of the circle; the child can both respond to and influence their context. Additionally, the perception of the person determines the reality of the experience. Because every person has a unique perspective on various experiences, "ecological niches" evolve based on particular environments and varied responses (Darling, 2007, p. 204).

Darling (2007) reviewed key ideas of Bronfenbrenner as reflected in selected research examples on the development of youth from low socioeconomic backgrounds and parent monitoring. Darling surmised that Bronfenbrenner's concerns about the inclusion of settings or context have informed research. Researchers have improved data collection due to use of better data sets and increase in sophisticated modeling of

relationships within and between systems, demonstrating the influence of previous work by Bronfenbrenner.

Neal and Neal (2013) questioned the effectiveness of the traditional model of circles – similar to nesting dolls – used by Bronfenbrenner to depict the various systems or contexts that influence development. The researchers utilized Simmel’s social circles (1955[1922]) that intersect with each other to devise a “networked” model in which researchers visualize ecological systems through networked, overlapping structures. Neal and Neal redefined the levels of the ecological systems theory and provided examples of how the new models allow for flexibility and analysis with greater specificity.

In Bronfenbrenner’s model, the individual most directly interacted with and was influenced by the microsystem, mesosystem, and exosystem. Neal and Neal (2013) explain that the microsystem in the nested circles model focuses on spatial place while the networked model focused on groups of people. For example, in the microsystem of an adult couple, the pair demonstrate caring to each other at home and also exhibit caring on vacation. Even though the couple interact in different physical settings, the relationship remains the same.

Neal and Neal (2013) further contrast how both models visualize the interactions that influence human development. In the original model, the mesosystem depicts the relationship interactions between individuals in two physical settings in which the developing person participates. In the networked model, the mesosystem articulates the interactions of the same individual within two different networks. In the original model, the exosystem describes one or more settings that may influence the individual, but in



which the participant may not be directly involved. In the networked model, exosystems indicate how sets of individual interactions that may or may not include the participant could influence the participant. For example, the family microsystem and the educational policy-making exosystem are not nested, but rather separate systems and should not be depicted occurring inside each other.

Neal and Neal (2013) propose that the nested model does not sufficiently visually represent the various interactions inherent with the ecological systems theory model. For example, Bronfenbrenner's relationship of the dyad could be more accurately illustrated through the networked model. With the introduction of virtual networks that further develop complexity of relationships and meaning, the networked model may more accurately depict the meaning of the relationships in this study of the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness.

Neal and Neal (2013) construct their networked model to reflect external influences, including the macrosystem and chronosystem. The macrosystem traditionally referred to the belief systems, ideology, and norms that guide interactions between individuals in a particular subculture/culture. In the networked model, the macrosystem depicts the social patterns that motivate the interactions in relationships between individuals: "First, the macrosystem is the set of social patterns that govern the formation and dissolution of social interactions between individuals, and thus the relationship among ecological systems" (Neal & Neal, 2013, p. 729). Macrosystems that do not have a noticeable effect have a low degree of influence on the behavior and interactions of the individual. The chronosystem represents the influence of time on the participant in a

particular context, such as the influence of puberty on the adolescent. In the networked model, the chronosystem emphasizes changes in the interactions between individuals over time.

According to Neal and Neal (2013), the networked model changes focus from where the interaction occurs to how the interaction occurs between participating individuals. Additionally, the networked model indicates more complex, overlapping and bridged influences. The networked model also emphasizes the concept that individuals in any setting can influence a person.

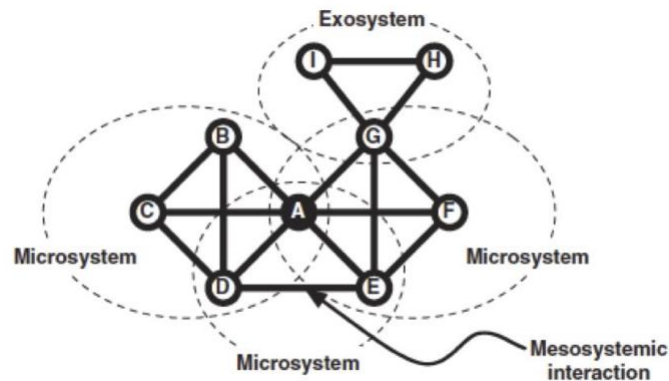


Figure 3.2. Ecological systems theory model depicted using a networked model (Neal & Neal, 2013, p. 278).

### **Music research and the ecological systems theory.**

Several researchers have used Bronfenbrenner's model in music research. Boer and Abubakar (2014) examined the influence of families and peer groups on the music listening practices of youth and young adults, including the psychological benefits of rituals used in family musical practices. Researchers evaluated families from both traditional/collectivistic and secular/individualistic cultures. Participants (n=760) from

four cultural contexts in high schools and universities completed surveys. Researchers found that music strengthened relationships between individuals and their social groups and enhanced positive emotional experiences. The authors discovered that listening to music and talking to family and friends supported development and enhanced overall well-being. Bronfenbrenner's work provided rationale for the study, but data were not filtered through the ecological systems theory framework.

Lum (2007) conducted an ethnography of the musical culture of children in a Primary I class of a school in Singapore. Initially, Lum (2007) conducted observations and informal interviews with three children and their teachers throughout the school day. The researcher investigated children and their music making both at home and at school. Lum (2007) focused on the music making for one child per day and conducted home observations. The researcher found that the school promoted cultural harmony through use of songs of multiple languages from the "mother-tongues" of representative cultural groups and that were performed during National Day celebrations. Lum (2007) noticed that teachers continued use of songs in various languages according to their own preferences and musical skills, even though the textbook promoted a balanced approach. Language teachers' use of music provided multiple opportunities for making music. Technological resources provided further avenues for incorporation of music from representative cultures in the classroom.

Lum (2007) surmised that children were influenced largely by popular and/or electronic music more than nursery rhymes and folk songs. Musical identities at home emerged from preferences of family members, as well as from popular culture and media

(e.g. radio and television). At school, musical engagement primarily functioned to foster cognitive development and a social sense of harmony between cultures. Outside of school, children engaged with music to connect with friends and family, resulting in increased musical encounters. Lum suggested that music educators needed to encourage more parent involvement and create music lessons that simulated the playful music making children engage in outside of the classroom.

Lum (2007) asked participants questions about their music interactions, but it seemed that the researcher made inferences and connections without verifying those connections from the perspective of the child, the person in the center Bronfenbrenner's model. For example, the researcher assumed that because a child memorized the theme song from a television show that the parents watched, the child sang the song because of parental influence; however, Lum did not emphasize reference conversations with the child on the influences and reasons for memorizing and performing the song, but rather seemed to document the occurrence of the event and make assumptions about the meaning of the event. In another occurrence, the researcher assumed that the CDs and Karaoke discs listened to by family members would provide music experiences for the child due to spatial proximity in the home (Lum, 2007, p. 128); however, just as correlation does not mean causation, proximity does not mean that the child's experience is a positive, influential encounter with music. In one example, Lum provided a child's perspective on the proximal processes influence his music selection. A male participant memorized all of the songs to an all-male religious pop group, because his parents wanted to expose him to specific Islamic messages in the songs.

### **Initial analysis using the ecological systems theory.**

I used the theoretical framework of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory (EST) to examine the sociological phenomena of music in the lives of children experiencing homelessness. In order to determine meanings of music and music engagement, I examined the strength of the relationships between children and various musical connection.

In order to determine the viability of the ecological systems theory for analysis, I analyzed the story of Ramona from *Songs in Their Heads* to determine how this theoretical framework could provide greater understanding. In particular, I explored how to depict data from the story of Ramona to most effectively indicate microsystems (proximal processes, molecular and molar activities, dyads, and social networks), mesosystems (direct social network, indirect linkage, and setting transition), exosystems, and macrosystems. First, I evaluated Ramona's musical life through Bronfenbrenner's theoretical framework using the original diagram of nested circles.

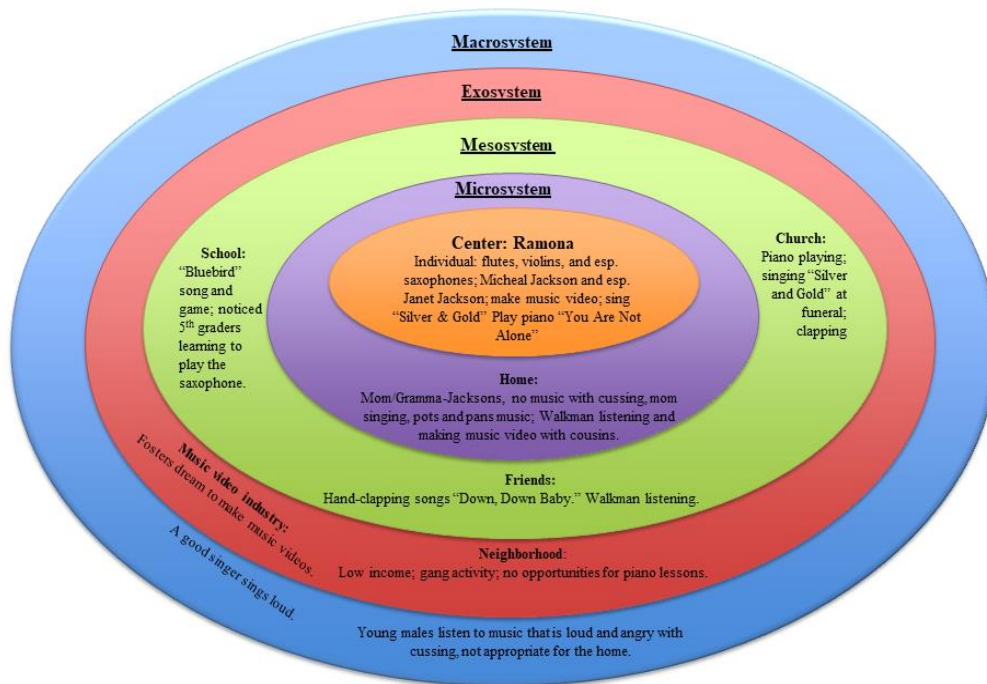


Figure 3.3. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory depicted by the original nested circles model used to organize information about the musical life of Ramona from *Songs in Their Heads* (Campbell, 2010, pp. 139-145).

From this model, I noticed that Ramona, the child in the center of the microsystem, reports distinct musical preferences, including performance of the flute, violin, and especially saxophones. She enjoys listening to Michael and Janet Jackson and wants to make a music video. She sings “Silver and Gold” to herself in multiple contexts. She wants to play the song, “You Are Not Alone” on the piano.

In her microsystem at home, Ramona experiences proximal process (consistent contact) with her mother and grandmother, strengthening primary dyads with both caregivers. She plays music using pots and pans, creating a memorable moment with

music that may be a molar activity due to it's residue. She listens to her Walkman when her cousins or friends come over. Her mother does not allow music with cussing, so Ramona reports that hip-hop music is bad. Her social networks at home include her mother, grandmother, and brother. However, because her brother's preferred music is hip-hop and her mother and grandmother are against hip-hop, the musical relationship between Ramona and her brother is not as strong. In contrast, Ramona admires her mother's singing and shares her musical taste. Because this appears to occur consistently, and Ramona sings music from the Jacksons and creates music videos by herself, the proximal processes appear strong. Her friends and cousins come over to listen to music and make music videos, demonstrating a primary link between systems, indicating occurrence of a mesosystem.

Ramona's mesosystem includes doing hand-clapping songs and listening to her Walkman with others. At school, another microsystem, Ramona enjoys singing the "Bluebird." She becomes intrigued with the saxophone from watching older children rehearsing at school, indicating an indirect linkage and the development of a second order network comprised of other members of the school community with whom Ramona may or may not have direct contact. Ramona goes to church with her immediate family, building a direct social network, where she watches others play the piano and joins in clapping to music. She sings "Silver and Gold" at a family funeral and continues to sing the song to herself at home and at school. Her relationship with this song continues across diverse mesosystems. Extended family with whom she also interacts at church provide supplementary links, creating multiple linking dyads, to her church social network.

Family and friends provide interesting communications and interesting knowledge through sharing particular songs, music experiences, and opportunities. Her mother joins the church choir and may function as a primary link in the future to this ensemble.

One strong positive exosystem relationship, as shared by Ramona, is the music video industry. She watches the videos and listens to the music and dreams of making music videos. Ramona admires the performers, trying to imitate them. Her low-income neighborhood plays the role of an exosystem with a negative impact. People do not come to the neighborhood unless they live there due to the prevalence of gang activity, raising a barrier to piano teachers who provide lessons and travel from outside the neighborhood. Due to the low-socioeconomic status, Ramona's family may also not be able to afford a piano in their home.

Overall beliefs that drive Ramona, her macrosystem, include her belief that a good singer sings loud, possibly due to her mother's example. Also, young males listen to music that is loud and angry with cussing, not appropriate for use in the home. Other macrosystem beliefs could include belief in the ability to make music with anything (pots and pans, singing, clapping, etc.). This model allows for depiction of various aspects of Ramon's musical life, but the relationships between the systems are not particularly clear. In figure 3.4., I provide an example of a depiction of Bronfenbrenner's ideas through Neal's networked model (2013) and discuss the advantage of using this model following the figure.



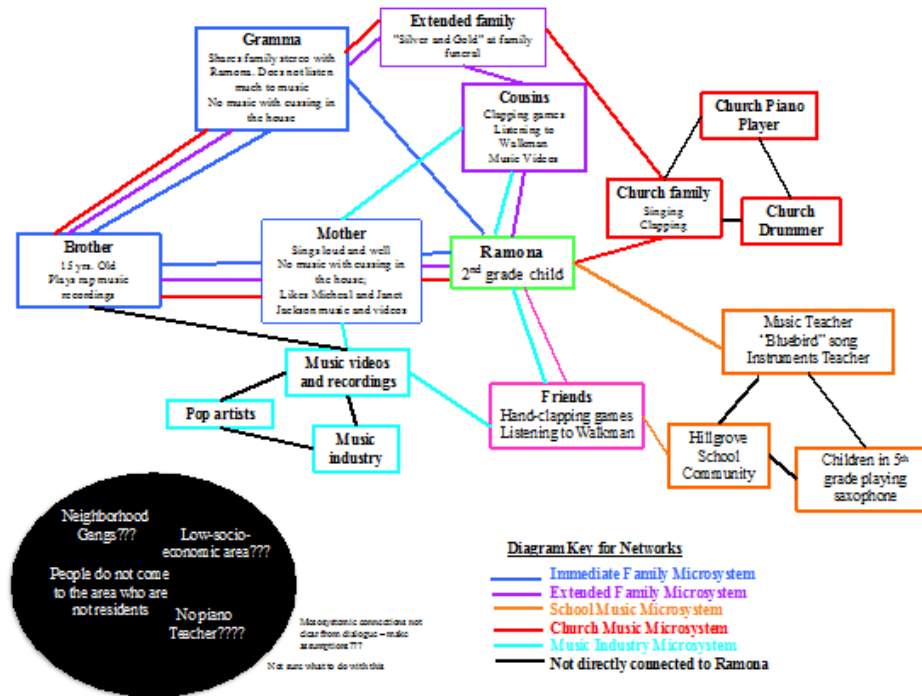


Figure 3.4. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological systems theory depicted by the original nested circles model used to organize information about the musical life of Ramona from *Songs in Their Heads* (Campbell, 2010, pp. 139-145)

In my adaptation of Neal and Neal’s networked model, I added color coding to the links in order to more clearly depict the relationships between five direct social networks in Ramona’s musical life: immediate family, extended family, church music, school music, and music industry microsystem. This depiction also more distinctly represents the embedded microsystems that connect to and from (or within) the mesosystems through the use of multiple colored links between individuals, indicating linking dyads of some kind. The exosystem links in black more clearly represents individuals who may have no direct contact with Ramona (at least not reported by

Ramona), but who clearly impact her musical life and who may be a microsystem of their own, though weakly linked. For the purposes of this study, the networked model seemed to be the best way to represent the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness. I use the networked model in chapter 5 to illustrate the musical and relationship networks of the children who participated in this study.

## Chapter 4

### THE SETTING OF HOPE CORPORATE

#### **Vignette: Kids Club – School Day**

The first bus comes roaring into the narrow parking lot of Hope Corporate and stops by the locked entrance. Ms. Valerie and Ms. Esmeralda meet the children. Some of them stand against the wall near the entrance as they wait for the shelter teachers to take roll. John Cena, a fourth grader, swings his backpack and gives a loud scream, staring down any kids who dare to look at him. Denise, his older sister, shouts, “Fuck it! Just fuck it!” to John Cena. Ms. Valerie takes John Cena aside and helps him breathe.

Ms. Esmeralda checks roll for the rest of the 3 to 11 year olds, “Are we ready to go in?” she asks children who are waiting against the wall. “Yes!” the children shout. Before they walk in, a member of the office staff (some of whom are residents at Hope Corporate) sits behind a window to the secure entrance pushes a buzzer to unlock the door so the children can enter the facilities. Children who are part of the Hope Corporate after-school care walk through the spacious waiting area, past the two sets of double doors, past the chapel and along the pathways through the buildings. Children ages 3-6 cross the yard to the doorway of a building that houses multiple classrooms surrounding a courtyard with a playground. The building houses the Cubs Club, and the young children enter there. Older children enter a different building with three connected rooms that houses Kids Club and is located next to the outdoor basketball courts.

First things first. It is now snack time. Children in Kids Club put away their backpacks. Ms. Esmeralda reminds them to go wash their hands and get ready for “Snack Time.” Tony practices his head stands while Lily sits down next to the computer and looks up “Frozen” on YouTube. Ms. Esmeralda roams around reminding children to sit down at the table in the kitchen area for their snacks. As they finally take their seats, Ms. Esmeralda puts on plastic disposable gloves and asks children what they would like to eat from today’s menu: “Do you want tuna fish? Do you want apples? Do you want crackers? Do you want water or milk to drink?” Wild Fire and Anna say something at exactly the same time. Wild Fire quickly interjects: “Jinx, double jinx, you owe me a soda.” Denise lays down on the stage and says, “I’m going to eat over here.” Ms. Esmeralda tells her she needs to eat at the table. Denise goes to the table, screaming multiple times, “I don’t want to eat at the table.” Eventually, she does sit down and eat, but at a different table from the rest of the children.

Wild Fire finishes her meal and announces, “I’m done.” Ms. Esmeralda asks, “What are you supposed to do next?” “Homework!” she responds. One by one the children finish eating and begin their homework. While they aren’t required to do their homework, they get “store dollars” for doing homework before other activities. Hector races to the computer as soon as his homework is done so he doesn’t have to sign up. Since Mary takes longer, she has to write her name on a sign-up list for the computer. Isabella goes to the library and picks out a few books to read. Billy and Joey get out the Connect 4 game they play.

John Cena enters the room with Ms. Valerie. He seems calmer now. He has his snack as the others are doing their homework. He starts on his math page, but says, "It's too hard. I can't do it." Briana, a volunteer, encourages him, making it a game, "You got this! Let's just see if you can do number one." Eventually, John Cena finishes the entire page and shouts, "I did it! Now can I go play?" Briana nods and he runs off to sign up for a turn on the video games and gets out the building blocks to create a masterpiece he can knock over.

I previously had talked with children about their day and helped pass out drinks during snack time. While children were finishing up their homework, I set up the karaoke machine and then floated around to assist those who wanted help. As children finished their homework, I helped them sign up to take turns and make their music selections on the karaoke machine. Wild Fire begs to sing "Shut Up and Dance" with the karaoke machine. A few others want to sing too, and they write their names on a sign-up paper, just like they sign up to use the computer or play video games.

John Cena takes his turn on the karaoke machine, which is set up on a big black wooden stage. He sings with Hector "Welcome to My House" and "Seven Years." Wild Fire once again takes the stage and sings the first part of songs but struggles on the verses so she loses interest and goes through songs quickly. Finally, she picks "Let It Go" from Frozen; she can sing most of the words.

Fire Star rushes in with her little brother. They are late because their school finished a little later than the others and the bus had to make a number of stops on its way to Hope Corporate. She sits at a kitchen table, looking wiped, and grunts one-word

responses when asked about her day. She finishes her snack, but skips the homework, saying she doesn't have any, and meanders over to the karaoke machine. Fire Star asks Wild Fire if she can join her. The two girls either perform or help others perform for the next 30 to 40 minutes, while other children play board games, build towers with blocks, or play video games. With 30 minutes left before the designated end of Kids Club, Wild Fire and Fire Star decide to dress up in leftover Halloween costumes and have a dance party to music on the radio. John Cena decides he's going to be Superman. They dance and play to "Stitches" (Shawn Mendez), "Uptown Funk" (Bruno Mars), "Starboy" (The Weeknd), and "Watch Me (Whip/Nae Nae)" (Silentó). Fire Star takes a break and heads to the Cracker Table where she eats saltine crackers.

All of the children start cleaning up around 5 p.m. Ms. Esmeralda plays bingo with those who are ready while parents wander in and sign out their children for the day. Ms. Valerie asks a few of the parents if they want some of the leftover snacks and reminds them about the upcoming "Read to Me" evening where community volunteers join families to encourage children to read. As children leave, some of the parents pick up paper bags of canned goods provided by the shelter. I say goodbye and walk back through the courtyard of Hope Corporate, where parents watch while children play freely on the lawn.

### **Hope Corporate Background and Overview**

In the 1960s, members of a non-profit religious organization in the southwestern United States initiated an outreach program to meet the needs of the community, particularly families living in low-income neighborhoods and other people experiencing

homelessness. The group gradually expanded its services over two decades and established the non-profit, Hope Corporate in the mid-1980s. In the early years of Hope Corporate, only women and children found assistance through their programs and facilities. By the 1990s, Hope Corporate developed two additional facilities to provide both emergency shelter and transitional housing for families and single individuals experiencing homelessness. While the umbrella of the Hope Corporate organization still supported separate shelters for women and children at the time of this study, the main campus facility provided accommodations for everyone in the family, including approved pets, and served as the setting for this study.

#### **Description of the setting of Hope Corporate.**

At the main Hope Corporate campus, residents receive support in a variety of ways. The cafeteria staff provide three meals a day so that residents can utilize more of their income towards permanent housing. Hope Corporate also provided residents with access to computers, job training, and continuing education classes to develop needed skills. Families can access a Wellness Center, medical services, and counseling for children and adults. Hope Corporate operate a market and catering business on-site which serve lunch during the day, providing a platform for on-site job training. Families also purchase additional snacks in the market, which includes items normally available for purchase at a convenience store.

Security is an essential component of the Hope Corporate facility. All guests must be pre-approved by a staff member or case manager. At each visit, guests must check in with the office staff before admission through the front door. In order to stay in the

shelter, families must follow specific rules that may seem strange but were implemented to keep everyone safe and foster a peaceful environment. (Field notes, January 15, 2017).

At other shelters I have visited in search for a site for this study, the buildings were old, small, and run-down. I found a marked difference in the environment at Hope Corporate. Whenever I walked on to the Hope Corporate campus, my first thought was always one of peace and tranquility. The lobby at Hope Corporate is clean and filled with light with overstuffed chairs scattered around. Just beyond the lobby was a large courtyard filled with flowers, paths, and decorative landscaping. A small two-story chapel with a sign that notifies families and visitors of various meetings and services is visible immediately. Single-family housing units (motel rooms or small apartments) encircled the main courtyard. Some of the units have balconies with bicycles or other family possessions stored on the balconies. Children who reside at Hope Corporate often use a colorful jungle gym playground on the campus that includes a water splash area for hot days. Adults and children lounge in multiple gazebos with tables and benches for people to enjoy the courtyard.

The classroom for the children who attended Kids Club, the setting of this study, was located next to basketball courts and a gym. Access to the gym provided additional space for more vigorous activities such as scooter games and dance classes. Connected to the gym is an area for the teen program that has extensive TV, computer, and video games and comfortable couches.



## **The Setting of Kids Club**

### **Physical description of Kids Club space.**

At the time of this study, the Kids Club classroom was comprised of three rooms with open doorways that connected the spaces. One room was the kitchen area, complete with a self-watering plan tower that had been donated to the facility, where children ate meals and prepared food. Children engaged in activities in the kitchen area, such as making snow cones, rock candy, and fresh-squeezed lemonade. Around the corner near the staff bathroom was the science center where children played at the “water table” and explored shells, pebbles, and other nature items.

A “cracker table” in the form of a small desk near the entrance served as a space for children to sit and eat crackers when they felt hungry and it was not snack time. Ms. Valerie, the lead teacher of Kids Club, shared that the cracker table helped children who anxiety due to a history of food insecurity. Children could always find food to eat whether or not it was the official time for snacks or meals (Reflection, June 14, 2017).

In the middle room, each child had a dedicated red locker for storing personal items. A big black stage with a backdrop painted on window blinds that created space for performances. During free choice time, children could sign up to use two computers with headphones that functioned as an activity station. Next to the computers was a “quiet time” area with a canopy, mattress, and pillows for children to relax on while they read or engaged in a similar quiet activity.

The third adjoining room included a giant play area with a media space that contained a stereo system, video games, and a large screen to watch videos. In this space,

children also had opportunities for hands-on play through the availability of various small percussion instruments (e.g. bells and drums), as well as a keyboard or two. Kids Club also provided items that could be used to play “dress up.” Other places in the room included, a doll house, blocks, board games, and multiple toy cars.

Towards the back of the room, children could draw, paint, or make plastic figures and then iron them together at a craft table. Posters scattered around the room display inspirational messages. Photos show children engaged in Kids Club activities, such as two boys “eating” edible play dough and smiling children with their families on special occasions. Ms. Valerie also displayed posters that promoted various “candidates” for Kids Club President and Vice-President. Artwork made by the children hung on the walls. I conducted most of the interviews in a little nook on the side next to the craft area which served as the library, an area comprised of two oversized stuff pleather brown chairs, a lamp, and a basket filled with books.

Well-meaning volunteers have sometimes caused more harm than good when they visit for various service projects. On one occasion, a local radio station donated their time and resources to renovate the middle room. They hung records on the wall near the media center and painted two of the main bathrooms used by all of the children. However, they decorated one of the bathrooms with a *Frozen* theme, painted it pink, and put Elsa decals everywhere. The boys said that it was the girls bathroom and would not use the facilities. Even after Ms. Valerie painted the bathroom a different color and the children who were there at the time of the pink paint were gone, the children still called that room the girls bathroom.



*Figure 4.1.* Kids Club media area.

### **Rules and procedures of Kids Club.**

Children attended Kids Club after school during the school year until 4:30 p.m. unless extended hours have been approved by shelter staff. On days that children did not attend school, they could come to Kids Club 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. At the end of the day, a parent or approved person needed to physically come to sign out the child and take them home. After homework time on Mondays through Thursdays, children had free choice time to engage in various forms of play according to their areas of interest. On Fridays, children had free choice time for the entire afternoon. They could choose to do homework, but this was only strongly encouraged on Monday through Thursday afternoon.

The Kids Club lead teacher, Ms. Valerie, established rules and procedures to keep everyone safe and peaceful. Overall, the three rules were:

1. Take care of yourself.

2. Take care of each other.
3. Take care of our things.

In addition to the official room rules, there were other rules and procedures communicated to children. The daily schedule framed other rules and procedures. After children arrived on the bus from school, they formed a line while Ms. Valerie or another staff person checked them in. Children walked in a line whenever they traveled around the Hope Corporate facility with Ms. Valerie or another Kids Club staff member. When children entered the Kids Club classroom after school, they first wash their hands and sat at the table to prepare for a healthy snack.

Before snacks or meals were served, everyone had to wash their hands and sit down in the dining area, unless they were going to eat in the large Hope Corporate dining hall. Ms. Valerie or another staff member shared with each child their options for their snack or meal and asked what they wanted to eat or drink. Some children always wanted everything, and others only chose to eat a few things, or sometimes nothing. Children were often offered both water and milk. No one could have a second helping until everyone had a turn to eat.

Following snack time on Mondays through Thursdays during the school year, the staff strongly encouraged children to work on homework for a specific period during “homework time.” If they did not have any homework, children could participate in other learning activities such as reading or exercises. If children choose to complete class assignments during homework time, they received credit on a chart and were rewarded with a “store dollar” at the end of the week.

Unless there was a specific group activity that was going on, children often had free choice time after homework was completed in which they selected to participate in an activity from a variety of activity options. Ms. Valerie often asked children who wanted around or invaded others' space to "find a purpose." Activities ranged from building a gingerbread house to playing video games to playing in the dollhouse. Children also played board games such as Connect Four or Uno, video games, making crafts, kinetic sand, etc. Occasionally, when the room was cleaned up and children were waiting for their parents, Ms. Valerie or another adult facilitated a bingo game.

Children could engage in any activity they wanted, but they could not join an activity in which there was a maximum number of children who were already engaged in a particular activity. For activities such as using computers or playing video games, only a few children participated at a time. In order to regulate the flow of children, each child signed up for 20 minutes of time on the computer or video games but could not do both computer time and video game time in a row. There was also a limit of four children at a time in the craft area. When numerous children wanted to engage in a music activity, I procured a piece of paper and writing utensil and children signed up for their music time, utilizing the same procedure followed for computer and video game use. For some activities, such as making fresh-squeezed lemonade, teachers invited only a few children to participate in the activity at a time. Overall, teachers emphasized that children had choices, but that those choices could not impede upon the play of another child.

The Kids Club staff organized incentives to motivate children to do positive things and also provide children with an income with which they could buy things they

needed or wanted. Children received a store dollar in their jar for tasks such as finishing homework or completion of assigned class jobs during their free choice time. Jobs included responsibilities such as sweeping various areas, running errands for the teacher, and straightening up the library. Children needed to complete their jobs fifteen minutes before the regular dismissal time.

On an assigned day, often on Fridays, children could come to the “store,” which was some bins full of donated items that had various prices on them. Children could spend their dollars or save up for something special they wanted. During the holidays, children could also come to bins and select something for “free” to wrap as a present to their parents or guardians.

Periodically, the Kids Club staff joined the early childhood education staff to create events to foster community and connections between residents and their children. In February, children participated in a Valentines Friendship Dance. A youth strings ensemble performed during the dinner followed by dancing to various selections. In May, the staff organized a Mother’s Day event that provided a platform for children to verbalize their appreciation for their mothers. Hope Corporate also displayed donated purses mothers could choose for themselves. Similar to other events, organized prepared dinner and ensured time for dancing to music. In June, the staff sponsored a Father’s Day event. The annual Hopes and Dreams Gala occurred in July where children and parents shared about what they wanted for their future. Children in Kids Club and Cubs Club (Ages 3-7) performed songs about their dreams and acted in skits about what it meant to be a hero in Kids Club.

**The lead teacher: Ms. Valerie.**

Imagine an enthusiastic African-American woman with a smile that welcomes one into the fold, and eyes that see all. She is there 9:30-6 p.m. Monday-Friday and works at a second job a few days a week to make ends meet. During the school day, she liaisons with local districts to help individual children and then "parents" them after school until their parents pick them up at 5:30 p.m. She also organizes excursions outside the community to provide children with an opportunity to do things that children with a higher economic status often experience (state fair, ice skating, camping trip, nature center trip, etc.).

She does not get flustered when a child is upset and does not often raise her voice. When she does, she raises her voice mainly to give instructions, refraining from raising it in anger. I do not know how Ms. Valerie does her job, accomplishes her mission, day in and day out. She constantly has new kids coming in and out of the classroom, some of them are older and are preparing to move on to the teen program. Some have just finished second grade and are still not quite verbal and have difficulty pronouncing some words.

Ms. Valerie has grown to be very specific with her words when talk to children about particular issues. In order to outline expected behavior guidelines, she says, "In Kids Club we. . . Often I heard her saying, "In Kids Club, we share with others. In Kids Club, we take turns, so you need to sign up for a time on the computer. In Kids Club, we are kind to others. In Kids Club, we clean up our mess because we need to take care of our things. In Kids Club we use our words and ask someone nicely to stop when they are doing something that bothers us." She also avoids praising children with the label "good"

so that children do not associate their behavior with their value as humans. She says that "all children are good children." Kids need to be praised for particular accomplishments such as being kind, thoughtful, etc. Ms. Valerie helps children who have had to endure various situations and environments where children are demeaned, learn how to be human again. Through her individual work with them, they become better over time, but it sometimes takes time.

In one example, Ms. Paula demonstrated how she did not penalize children for not understanding how their actions violated the rules. After the set-up for the "Friendship Dance" in celebration of Valentine's Day, children were waiting to participate in the Instrument Petting Zoo. I had kept them active with Chinese Telephone, but they needed to get ready. However, we had to wait again for an unknown reason. AAM and JC and others were playing "Pikachu," a hand-clapping children's game not to be exactly replicated in the classroom. After you and a partner completed a rhyme with hand claps, you play "Rock, Paper, Scissors" and the winner pinches the losers cheek and hangs on. You play the game again with the same results. Both parties could have one hand on the other's cheek. When You lose two times, so you have both cheeks pinched, the winner slaps you on both cheeks and the game begins again. JC and his sister Denise taught me this game, albeit gently. AAM pinched JC's cheeks hard when JC lost and slapped him so hard on the cheeks that he fell to the ground. JC laid on the floor for a few minutes. I asked him if he was okay and then said something to Ms. Valerie, who first found out the story. Ms. Valerie asked the one who hurt the other to apologize and check on him to see if JC was okay. (The rule is if you hurt someone, you need to check on them and make



sure they are okay.). Ms. Valerie said that in Kids Club we need to be kind and safe with others and this was not safe. If the children wanted to play the game, they needed to find another way to play it. One of the little ones in Cubs Club (K-2nd) suggested that the children put hands on shoulders instead of pinching cheeks and they played the game that way. Ms. Valerie took JC with her to help her in the room for a few minutes at the beginning of the petting zoo so JC could feel safe and make sure he was okay. (Field Notes)

Most recently, when the kids were lining up, Ms. Valerie was going to make a phone call to check on something for me and there was some commotion in the line. One person had "cut" but others had felt that they had gotten pushed. Ms. Valerie took the time to find out what happened and did not refute the children when two different told conflicting sides of the story. She explained that what could have happened is that someone could have pushed accidentally when they got into line. Since both of the children were saying that they told the truth, but their stories did not connect, she had to believe them. She could choose their spots, or they could do "rock paper scissors" and the winner could stand in front of the other child. At first, the children were just doing the same thing as each other and Ms. Valerie had to coach them on "rock paper scissors." The one who lost started crying because he lost. Ms. Valerie said he should be proud of himself because he made a fair and square choice and he followed the results fair and square. In a few minutes he had stopped and was on his way to lunch.

Aside from instilling values and behaviors that help the community (sharing, kindness, etc.), Ms. Valerie attempts to empower the individual a valued member of the

democratic process. When you enter the room, posters hanging up on a high divider between the rooms. Ms. Valerie has initiated a class election for the offices of President and Vice-President of Kids Club. The posters are various colors and hand-drawn saying, "Vote for Me!" with explanations on why that child thought he/she would make a good President or Vice-President. Early on, Ms. Valerie tries to explain the democratic process through praxial exploration of elections, voting, and the agency of the individual throughout the process.

A different election occurred previously, but kids moved on to permanent housing or other classrooms so they could not keep their positions very long. However, during this previous session, the Co-Presidents made flags that represented Kids Club. Ms. Valerie was adamant that the meaning of the colors needed to represent something positive. J \_\_\_\_\_ had chosen black as one of the colors saying, "This black color represents the darkness that we feel sometimes." Ms. Paula validated her experience, yet asked her to think of another meaning and guided her to look on the internet to find an alternate meaning for the color "black"

While children living in the shelter are typical kids in many ways, there are some common needs that Ms. Valerie has taught me about. For example, children often have trouble communicating whether it is to request something from other child or engage in a conversation with an adult. Ms. Valerie often has to teach children about shaking hands and verbalizing greetings such as, "Hello \_\_\_\_\_ How are you? Thank you. Will you please \_\_\_\_\_." She emphasizes the power of choice, allowing children to make their own choices about what they will play, only asking that in free play, children "find a

purpose." She also allows children to choose whether or not they want to eat the snack/meal for the day, etc. She never berates or tries to force a child to eat but honors their likes/dislikes. That said, she has taught me that children who have experienced hunger have a fear of not having enough food to eat. To help allay this fear, Ms. Valerie set up a "Cracker Table," a little desk with some packages of crackers and a can for the wrappers that instructs children to clean up after themselves at the cracker table. Children can go to the cracker table and sit and eat crackers, alleviating a fear of not having enough to eat.

Ms. Valerie attempts to build community and connections between children and their parents. In the classroom, you notice pictures of children with their mothers- such as a special photo session for Mother's Day. Ms. Valerie and the rest of the shelter staff host a community outreach event to the parents of children in the program. They have hosted ice cream socials, Valentine's Day Dances, Mother's Day Celebration, and Doughnuts with Dads for Father's Day. The larger events were quite complex. For example, children gave golden star awards and asked children to share why their mother deserved the award. The entrance was a red carpet in keeping with the "Star" theme. Ms. Valerie also greets each parent cheerfully and allows each parent to have choices, while supporting each parent with their particular challenges. Sometimes, she has tried to help a parent understand what might have happened at school and strategize about a conversation with the teacher. At other times, she explains a particular "rule" or procedure of the facility that the parent needs to know. When children make decisions that are not the greatest, she calmly explains what happened and gives hope that tomorrow will be different.

Art, music, drama, and dance fill the roster of experiences children can engage in.

Ms. Valerie has facilitated guest volunteers to come and share with the kids. A native American charity group came with 'talking drums' and every child was given a handmade drum. (PICS). Dance instructors in hip-hop, ballet, and other types of dance have shared in the past and will work with children regularly during the summer. Ms. Valerie helped bring in the Sound Academy, a non-profit organization that provides string education for low-income children, for the Valentine's Day dance. In the classroom, kids have the opportunity to play the keyboard and use small percussion instruments as part of their options to engage in various types of play. Kids can also sign up for computer time and listen to music through YouTube or other similar sources. Ms. Valerie hosts periodic talent shows for the class where kids can shine. She plays quiet music during homework time and often has the radio playing while kids are engaged in various activities. Ms. Valerie definitely has particular music tastes and chose the playlist for the Valentine's Day Dance and Mother's Day event that included the following songs:

- “You've Got A Friend in Me” (Lyle Lovett)
- “Count On Me” (Bruno Mars)
- “My Best Friend” (Weezer)
- “Time is Love” (Josh Turner)
- “Uptown Funk” (Mark Ronson)

- “Watch Me” (Whip/Nae Nae) (Silentó)
- “We Are Family” (Sister Sledge)
- “We Found Love” (Rihanna)
- “Friend” (Meghan Trainor)
- “Oath” (Cher Lloyd)
- “True Friend” (Hannah Montana)
- “Mama Said” (Lukas Graham)
- “Celebration” (Kool and the Gang)
- “Firework” (Katy Perry)
- “Can't Stop the Feelin'” (Justin Timberlake)
- “Ain't No Mountain High Enough” (Marvin Gaye)
- “Cha Cha Slide” (Mr. C)
- “Cupid Shuffle” (Cupid)
- “Juju On That Beat” (TZ Anthem and Zay Hilfiger)
- “Rockabye” (Clean Bandit)
- “Run the World (Girls)” (Beyoncé)
- “Celebration” (Kool & the Gang)
- “Better When I'm Dancin'” (Meghan Trainor)
- “Ladies Night” (Kool & the Gang)
- “A Song for Moms” (Boyz II Men)
- “Just the Way You Are” (Bruno Mars)
- “Cupid Shuffle” (Cupid)

- “Bet You Can’t Do It Like Me” (DLOW)
- “Hit the Quan - Original Version” (iLoveMemphis)
- “Me Too” (Meghan Trainor)
- “Can’t Stop the Feeling” (Justin Timberlake)
- “Mom” (Meghan Trainor)
- “I’m Coming Out” (Diana Ross)
- “This One’s for the Girls” (Martina McBride)
- “Angel” (Shaggy)
- “Juju On That Beat” (Zay Hilfiger)

**Other Vignettes: Kids Club.**

***Kids Club: Variety show.***

I walk in the room and the children inform me: “You’re just in time for our show!” Nugla Nove and his son holding up blanket to mimic a curtain in between each act. John Cena acts as the MC or “hype man” and sets the tone: To start off our show, here is Fire Star performing “I Feel It Coming.” John Cena and Fire Star perform the dance to “Watch Me Whip/Nae.” Two children read a poem they created. Denise, James, and John Cena dance and lip sync to “Star Boy.” Fire Star organizes everyone saying, “Everyone tell each other your code name. John Cena’s going to be in the middle.” John Cena practices his handstands to warm up for his turn in the spotlight. Ms. Valerie, myself, and the other shelter staff clap and shout encouragement for each act.

***Kids Club: Summer day.***

Early in the morning on this hot June day, parents bring their children ages 3 to 11 to the Cubs Club location at Hope Corporate where they eat breakfast (today, an English muffin, cream cheese, and a hard-boiled egg) and play in different stations or make volcanoes under the watchful gaze of Mr. Charlie until Ms. Valerie arrives at 9:30 a.m. To get children focused before a transition to two separate rooms, Ms. Valerie plays Freeze Dance where children move to music, such as “Ju On That Beat,” and freeze when she stops the music. Children who get “caught” moving are “out.” When the class is focused, children ages eight to eleven walk with Ms. Valerie across the parking lot to the Kids Club classroom.

When children in Kids Club enter their classroom, they play in stations, which include a keyboard station (available all of the time), and an iPad station because I am visiting. Maria and Seara immediately both go to the piano, but Maria is there first and Seara agrees to take turns and play the keyboard using World Scales iPad until Maria is finished on the keyboard. Maria begs me to teach her “Mary Had A Little Lamb” and remarks on “how cool” it is that the words of the song match the piano part. Teo and Sebastian enter the room and start playing tag until Ms. Valerie commands, “Find a purpose” and they decide to build a marble run (a structure children can build and put marbles in the top and watch them go down). Julio plays educational games on the computer, while Anton goes to the craft area and begins to create a colorful star using Perler Beads (a craft where you put the beads on a plastic pegboard and then use an iron to melt the beads together to create a colored object). After 20 minutes, Maria trades with

Seara and creates music on the iPad while Seara asks me to help her learn a song on the piano. I interview Seara when we are done with our “piano lesson.”

At 11:00 a.m. everyone in the Kids Club stops what they are doing comes together for a group lesson. Today Ms. Valerie asks children what they think a superhero is. Most say action figures such as “Superman” or “Spiderman.” Maria shares that her mom is her hero. Ms. Valerie asks what superheroes do to make them a superhero. Most agree that superheroes fight bad guys to help people. Ms. Valerie explains that in Kids Den, being a superhero means helping others. She conducts various role-playing skits where someone falls down and the child playing the “superhero” wears a red helps the fallen child up, asking, “Are you okay?”

Two adults walk into the room and share they are from a city health organization to talk about water safety. They show a video and ask children about how they would handle various water situations and stress that children should never go in water without an adult. After completion of their water safety training, the adults give children certificates to show they are now “Water Safe.”

At noon, children clean up the room, wash their hands, and line up for lunch. Today, they ask me to eat lunch with them. We walk quietly over to the cafeteria and the children sit down. Ms. Valerie and I ask each child if they prefer milk or water and bring them the requested drink. Table by table, children go through the cafeteria line to get their meal of corn dog poppers, waffle fries, coleslaw, and a slice of strawberry cake. My



table is the last to go because Teo, Sebastian, and Hector are taking turns spitting Jeffy rhymes:<sup>11</sup>

Hey, Daddy wanna see my pencil?  
I stick it in my nose until it hits the middle.  
It's yellow, it's special  
It tastes like a pretzel  
I hit on my head to make this instrumental  
I'm mental, I'm crazy  
Diaper like a baby

When the boys finish the rap, they are quiet and can finally go get their lunch. With only 30 minutes for lunch, children quickly finish before other residents come for their lunch. Children bring their trays to the lunch counter and flip chairs on top of the table. Upon their return to classroom around 12:30 p.m., the eight to eleven-year-old children in Kids Club are joined by eight children ages five to seven that attend Cubs Club. Everyone takes a blanket from the couch and finds a place on the floor to lay down and take a nap in one of the three adjoining rooms. Teo lays down on the stage while Seara, Maria, and Teo lay down on the floor in the main playroom. I join them and lay down on the couch for my own nap. The Cubs Club teachers take their break while the children are sleeping. I sneak in an interview with Teo as children are getting ready to nap.

<sup>11</sup>Jeffy music video. Accessed November 11, 2019: <https://youtu.be/CCjogZV9aF4>

When they wake up, all of the Cubs Club younger children want to sing karaoke at once and sing “Let It Go” (Frozen) and “7 Years” (Lukas Graham) over and over. Seara helps them sing a long because all of them want to sing at once. Some are audience members while they take turns singing. When they are not singing, Cubs Club children are doing multiple activities. It is more chaotic in the room as the younger children move from activity to activity every ten minutes. They take out all of the dress up clothes in the play area, get out all of the blocks, draw pictures, and read books all at once. Maria hides with my iPad and headphones to make beats. Seara wants to use the iPad but is willing to play with dolls until it is her turn. She makes her dolls dance and sing songs when they go to parties. When the Cubs Club staff return from their break, they take children to the gym to play basketball while Ms. Valerie starts to make popcorn for the afternoon movie time.



*Figure 4.2.* Hope Corporate gym

At 2:00 p.m., all of the children clean up and get ready for movie time. While they start *The Jungle Book*, children take turns choosing what popcorn flavor topping they

want for their popcorn and taking their popcorn back to their seats. Ms. Esmeralda hands out sour gummy worms and then takes her break. Children sit or lay down as they eat and watch the familiar film. Seara asks if I want some of her popcorn and shares some with me.

When parents come to pick up their children around 3:30 p.m., Ms. Valerie makes sure they sign the field trip form for their upcoming trip to the nearby children's museum. She also reminds them about water day the next afternoon when they use hoses to spray water on the Cubs Club playground. Children who are still there after 4:00 p.m. go to the Cubs Club classroom to wait for their parents for late check-out because Ms. Valerie and Ms. Esmeralda have worked a full day and need to leave, so other staff who arrived later will keep the children for the rest of the time.

## Chapter 5

### THE CHILDREN OF HOPE CORPORATE

#### **Introduction**

The first two questions of this study to seek to elucidate the musical lives of children experiencing homeless

1. What are the past, present, and imagined future musical lives of children experiencing homelessness?
2. How are their musical lives reflective of their structures of relationships in their lives?

In this chapter, I will present information about the participants in this study who helped answer these questions. Children in this study shared their stories to explain how music in their lives connected them to others. Participants originated from different states, engaged with a variety of music, identified with diverse ethnic backgrounds, and were part of unique families and held three things in common. First, they all experienced homelessness and were experiencing homelessness at the time of this study and were, hopefully, on the path to a better life. From conversations with the families and the Hope Corporate staff, I became aware of the reality that housing instability could continue to be a part of their lives of these children and families. For example, one of the families I interviewed for this study had recently lived in a different shelter.

Every participant had previous music experiences, whether through their family connections, school, or personal musical engagement. All children listened to music in some capacity either via the radio, a CD player, a computer, or phone. All children engaged in music activities during our time together and hoped for future opportunities to make music.

Before this study, I assumed that because parents struggled financially, they did not or could not sufficiently care for their children. In this study, all parents demonstrated pride in their children and proclaimed support for their child and their child's dreams for whatever the child wanted to do in life. Multiple parents at events I attended at Hope Corporate shared that their children were their heroes and their inspiration, the reason the parents were able to sustain their efforts towards a better life.

In this chapter, I share the story of each child from my observations, interviews, and interactions with the child, as well as a few parents. I will reflect on the profile of each participant and provide analysis on the music relationships that fostered meaningful connections in their lives. Due to privacy concerns, I was not able to verify all of the information shared with me. This is the story of *their* truths, the children's realities as they chose to share them with me.

### **Summary of Music Network Analysis**

In this chapter, I analyze the experience of each participant according to the framework of the ecological systems theory to explore the extent of the music relationships encountered by children in this study. For each child, I present a brief biographical paragraph, then outline the musical and relational microsystems as described

by the child and, when available, other family members. The microsystems include virtual/media, immediate family, extended family, school, and shelter networks. After the microsystem networks, I present arrange the microsystems together into a musical mesosystem and a relational mesosystem for each child, then provide further analysis of the mesosystems through the lens of Bronfenbrenner's (2005) ecological systems theory and depicted using the network model developed by Neal and Neal (2013).

Bronfenbrenner depicted his ideas using a model of concentric circles visualized similar to nesting dolls arranged one inside the other with the microsystem as the smallest circle in the center (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22). Neal and Neal (2013) proposed that researchers use a model comprised of networks that could more accurately demonstrate Bronfenbrenner's original emphasis on the relationships between individuals that mutually contribute to their growth.

In the analysis of mesosystems, I focus on dimensions of the ecological systems theory that appeared most salient for this study. First, in Bronfenbrenner's work, the more consistent and poignant the proximal process, the more lasting the development of the child. In the lives of the participants in this study, the more consistent and poignant the process, the more meaningful the memory of the music activity. Children may engage in either *molecular activities* or *molar activities* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 45). Molecular activities do not have innate meaning, while molar activities hold deep meaning for the child.

Second, I focus on relationships. The relationships children form between individuals and kinds of music create distinct networks that support their lives. When the

child connects with another individual and they influence or inform the actions of each other, a dyad forms. In this study, a virtual dyad develops when a child interacts consistently with internet media sources because internet content providers, such as particular YouTube channel producers, often communicate with their audience and children respond to media content. When the child merely observes the other, an *observational dyad* forms (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 56). If both parties mutually engage in the activity, a *joint activity dyad* emerges. For example, a child watching his parent listen to a particular song on the radio is an observational dyad. If a child and parent both sing along to the radio together, it is a joint activity dyad. Each dyadic relationship that occurs even when the individuals are not in physical proximity is a *primary dyad*. In this analysis, I focus on these kinds of dyads and on the open and closed social networks formed by these connections.

The exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem in Bronfenbrenner's model depict a broader perspective on the experience of a child. The exosystem entails networks that may not necessarily come into contact with the child, but that impact the child, such as the local or national music education organization network. The macrosystem labels the belief systems, cultural norms, and common practices the child encounters, such as the belief by parents that children should not listen to hip-hop music because of expletives in the lyrics. The chronosystem describes how the natural biological changes in the life of a child over time inform choices and the strength of dyads. The exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem require more time outside the parameters of this study to

determine the extent of the meaning they bring to the musical choices of the child. I comment briefly on these systems at the end of this chapter and in chapter 6.

### **Case One: John Cena**

John Cena identified as an African-American male in the fourth grade who I knew from November 2016 to March 2017. His pseudonym for the study, “John Cena,” was the name of a white WWE wrestling superstar he “knew” through YouTube. He lived at Hope Corporate with his mother and older sister, Denise, who also participated in this study. John Cena was as physically active child. One moment, he tried out his handstands or other moves, the next he built large structures with blocks and then knocked them down with a gleeful shout. He enjoyed participating in hands-on activities such as making fresh-squeezed lemonade. John Cena often displayed dance moves instead of singing when performing during class time.

At times, John Cena displayed behavior due to feeling angry because he could not do something. For example, on one occasion he was upset that he did not get his “store dollar” for the day because he did not finish his classroom job by the deadline. He stood on the mattress in the quiet area and hit the decorative covering over the area until his mother picked him up. On another occasion, John Cena then got off the bus angry at the world and Ms. Valerie calmed him down. Later that day, he was struggling with his homework and shouted out, “I want to see my daddy, but my mamma won’t let me.”

Even though John Cena communicated feelings of anger or frustration, he did not always reciprocate with anger or violence. For example, when his sister, Denise, grabbed the karaoke microphone away from him and caused him to fall and hurt his arm, John



Cena grabbed his arm and complained that it was injured but did not fight back. On another occasion, a child was physically aggressive towards John Cena in a game of “Pikachu,” which involves playful pinching and slapping in its original form. When the other child slapped him hard on both cheeks at once, harder than the game calls for, John Cena laid on the floor for a few minutes, but did not fight back.

**John Cena: Microsystem networks and analysis.**

***John Cena: Media network.***

John Cena explored various YouTube videos and other websites to access music and other media online. His media viewing, usually on his own and not shared with others, created proximal processes, interactions that influenced the development of his other relationships and music activity choices. Virtual “relationships” he formed via the internet were important to him, evidenced by the time that he spent on the internet at Kids Club and outside of the Kids Club via his mother’s smart phone.

John Cena frequently accessed the World Wide Wrestling website and when he used the Karaoke machine, he frequently chose to sing “Welcome to My House” (Florida), the theme song for World Wide Wrestling WrestleMania 32.<sup>12</sup> He also frequently visited the YouTube channel for Wassabi Productions/Guava Juice to watch Alex and Roi Wassabi videos, which included the brothers singing songs and conducting entertaining challenges. The dotted lines indicate a weaker link between John Cena and his media network.

<sup>12</sup> WrestleMania Theme Song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qlmdreZEYyQ>

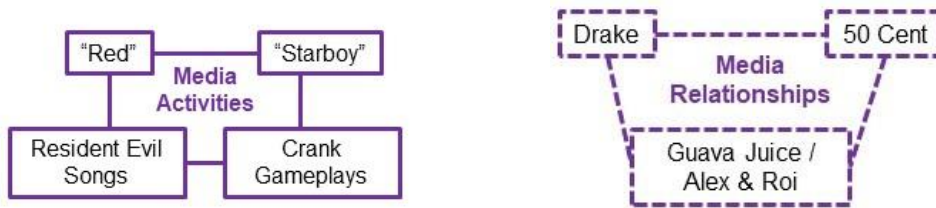


Figure 5.1. John Cena: Media network activities and relationships.

***John Cena: Immediate family network.***

John Cena’s immediate family was comprised of his older sister (Denise), his mother (Verona), and his father, who did not live with the family. John Cena mentioned that he wanted to see his father, who played the drums, and cried and acted out when his mother would not allow contact. John Cena and his family usually consumed music via YouTube or other websites using phones or other media devices.

According to his mother, every year John Cena, Denise, and Verona sang “This Christmas” (Donnie Hathaway) around the holidays. Verona commented that she could not imagine the holidays without this song. John Cena and his family sang “We Wish You A Merry Christmas” and “The Twelve Days of Christmas” on Christmas Eve. His mother reported that enjoyed singing at church. The dotted lines indicate a broken link between John Cena and his absent father.

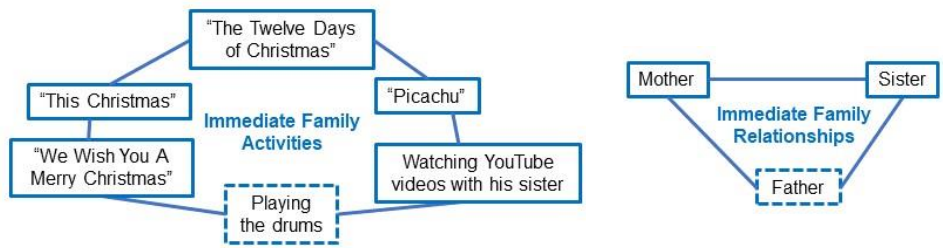


Figure 5.2. John Cena: Immediate family network activities and relationships.

**John Cena: Extended family network.**

When they lived in the midwestern United States, John Cena’s immediate family joined his extended family (e.g. aunt, uncle, and grandma) and, according to John Cena, sang holiday songs such as the “Twelve Days of Christmas,” watched the movie *Frozen* when they made dinner and cookies, and sang “We Wish You A Merry Christmas” when they went to bed (Interview, January 30, 2017). John Cena’s specific recollection of positive memories indicated evidence of molar activities.



Figure 5.3. John Cena: Extended family network activities and relationships.

**John Cena: Church community network.**

John Cena, his sister, and his mother attended church services when they lived in the midwestern United States. He did not recall any particular songs or anything positive about the experience. It is likely that his extended family also attended church services with him either regularly or on special occasions. At the time of this study, music at

church was not meaningful enough for him to remember any songs or positive experiences. The music relationship formed through his church network are unknown at this time, although he may find the music activities at church meaningful at a later time. The weaker link between John Cena and his church activities and relationships is indicated by a dotted line.



Figure 5.4. John Cena: Church community network activities and relationships.

***John Cena: Shelter community network.***

During interviews, John Cena reported that he wanted to participate in music making at the shelter where he could be on stage. As noted earlier, he learned popular music songs via the internet through watching YouTube or content on the WWE Wrestling site. One of his favorite songs from WWE wrestling was “Welcome to My House” (Flo Rida), which he sang multiple times whenever the karaoke machine was available at the shelter. He was most successful at singing the chorus, stumbling over lyrics during the verses.

Multiple times, John Cena asked to sing the song “7 Years” recorded by Lukas Graham. On a day that I did not bring the karaoke machine to the shelter, John Cena asked me where it was and if I could bring it again. He explained that he worked on “7 Years” all night, listening to it over and over in order to be ready to sing it when I came.

He later tried to sing “7 Years” with another child, who for some reason did not feel comfortable during the middle of the song. John Cena acquiesced and ended the song early.

At Hope Corporate, children signed up for turns on the karaoke machine, and John Cena eagerly embodied the roll of an MC (Master of Ceremonies) or what Verona called a “hype man” as children took their turns. John Cena often took the mic and announced each person in a dramatic way, such as, “And now introducing Wild Fire and Fire Star who will sing for us ‘Cool for the Summer.’” One once occasion, the children in Kids Club created a variety show to perform for the adults. John Cena danced and practiced his hand stands for the show. He also sang with the group songs such as “Watch Me Whip (Nae Nae).”

John Cena often chose to use the iPad to create music rather than use the karaoke machine to perform music. When it was available, John Cena and his friend used the iMaschine application on the iPad to create their own beats.<sup>13</sup> For example, one afternoon, children sat quietly in the gym while they waited for their turn to complete a video recording about their hopes and dreams that the staff was making for a fundraising event to support the shelter. John Cena and a friend sat with their backs against the wall and held the iPad in between them. Both children wore headphones and used a splitter attachment to jointly use the iPad, and they created a 10-second beat using the iMaschine.

<sup>13</sup> SoundCloud playlist that includes John Cena’s composition: <https://soundcloud.com/corrie-box/sets/hopecorporatetestudy>

John Cena often moved to music, but on his own terms, or sang while moving. He frequently started to dance during others' singing. He engaged in dance moves when a karaoke singer performed or during the Kids Club talent show. On another occasion, John Cena sang while playing hacky sack. John Cena showed off his handstand move and provided the dance intermission when Fire Star, another child, sang "Whip/Nae." In contrast, when a volunteer came to teach children hip-hop moves, John Cena refused to participate in the freestyle segment of the session. He also refused to participate through movement at the Friendship Dance organized by the staff at Valentine's Day,

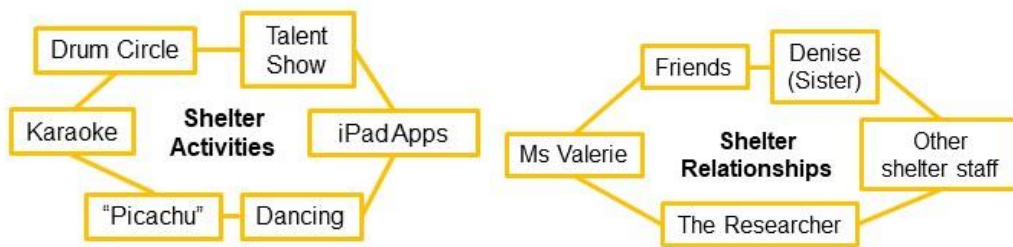


Figure 5.5. John Cena: Shelter community network activities and relationships.

***John Cena: School community network.***

At his previous school in the midwestern United States, John Cena played the trumpet. He reported that he was supposed to play "Welcome to My House" with his class at the concert but thought he could not play because of stage fright. Yet he reported that he did play. In his words, "I just loosened my mind like I don't got stage fright, and I just went up there and started playing." Verona, John Cena's mother, thought that he only performed Christmas songs with his class. However, John Cena recalled that his class sang "Juju On That Beat," which may have occurred separately from a performance. He also enjoyed playing the drums, an activity also engaged in by his absent father.

In his currently school, John Cena attended music class two days per week for one semester of the school year, but he commented, “We don’t do nothing. All we do is sing.” In the future, he wanted “do lots of concerts” and perform on the drums because they were loud. Verona noted that her son was a good dancer and associated being able to dance with having a good sense of rhythm for the drums. Additionally, Verona shared, “You know when my family was in [another state], I think he was allowed to play the drums for a little bit and he was like his dad. So, I think he will be good on that” (Interview, January 30, 2017). Verona wanted John Cena to play drums in the marching band or in her words, “the one that goes on the football field.” The dotted lines indicate the fractures and weaker links in his school activities and relationships.

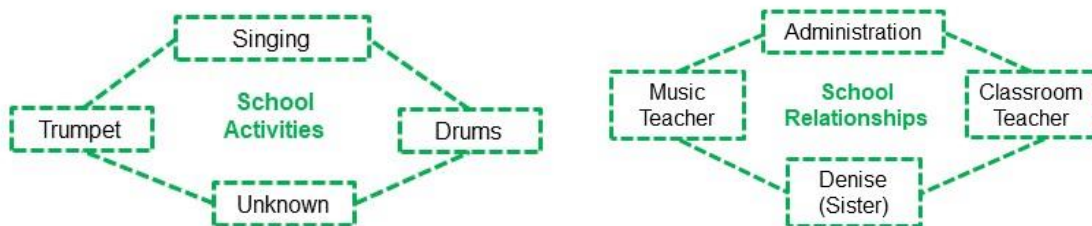


Figure 5.6. John Cena: School community music activities and network relationships.

**John Cena: Mesosystem networks.**

Accessing the World Wide Wrestling website became a molar activity, an activity with meaning when website media appeared to influence his choices outside of his media network. Some music engagement, such as singing songs at church, was a molecular activity because he did not remember any of the songs. Alternatively, John Cena engaged in molar music activities when he sang songs with his family that held ritualistic meaning.

The *direct social network* that was comprised of his mother and his sister, and their music interests, was present across multiple networks including John Cena's immediate family, extended family, shelter, and church network. Second-order networks across multiple primary networks that may or may not have had direct contact with John Cena included his school network and district network. At the time of our interviews, his father was not consistently present and became a part of John Cena's second-order network.

John Cena and his immediate family conducted joint activities connected to his media network. His mother ensured access to YouTube and his sister occasionally watched videos with him, providing an avenue for *interesting communication* to occur. Other interesting information transferred between settings when, for example, shelter staff communicated with parents about music performance events in the Kids Club, or when conversations occurred between John Cena and his mother about experiences in other networks such as videos he watched on YouTube or music experiences he encountered at school. John Cena gained *interesting knowledge* from the friend that introduced him to "7 Years," which intrigued him enough to continue to pursue more information about that song.

If I drew lines connecting John Cena's microsystem, I would illustrate the connection between John Cena and Denise in multiple microsystems. I would also illustrate the connection between John Cena, playing the drums at school, and his absent father. Additionally, I would elucidate how activities in his extended family continued in his immediate family.



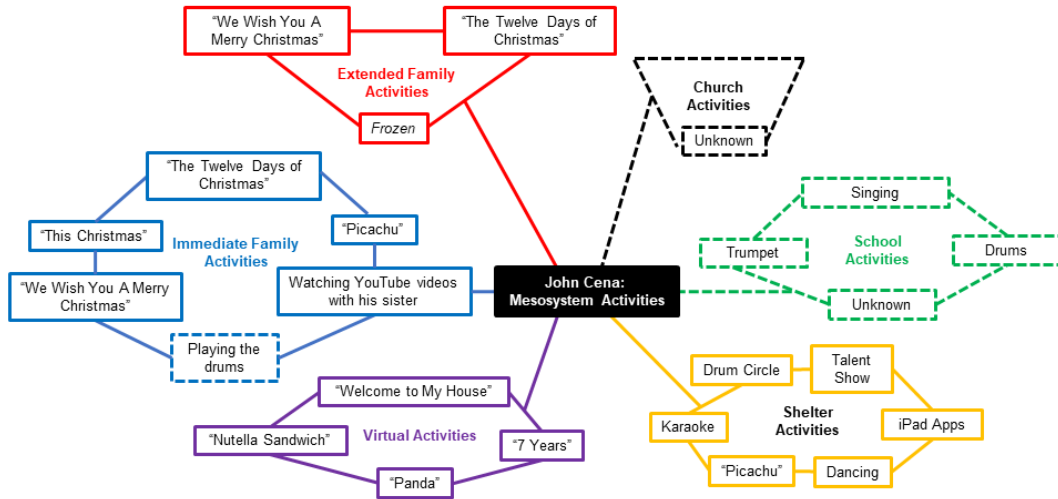


Figure 5.7. John Cena: Mesosystem music activities.

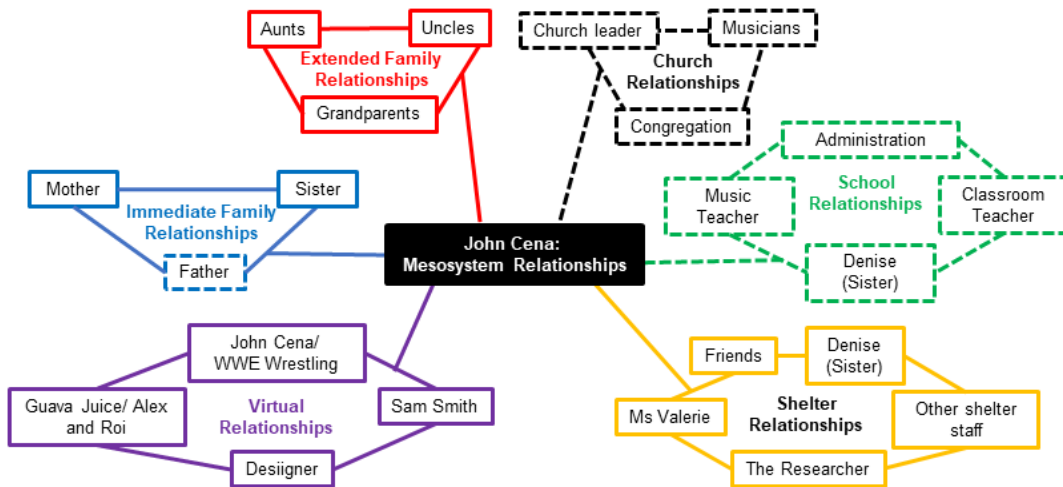


Figure 5.8. John Cena: Mesosystem music relationships.

**John Cena: Network analysis.**

John Cena spends a lot of free time at home watching YouTube videos, functioning as a solitary link between himself and media entities. Virtual media personalities, in particular the WWE Wrestling phenom John Cena, inspire his choice of pseudonym and song selections on the karaoke machine at Kids Club (mesosystem),

illustrating dyadic connections between John Cena and virtual artists which remain intact throughout his experience with housing instability.

Accessing the World Wide Wrestling website is a molar activity, an activity with meaning when website media appears to influence his choices outside of his media network. Another molar activity was his frequent visits to the YouTube channel for Wassabi Productions/Guava Juice to watch Alex and Roi Wassabi videos, which included the brothers singing songs and conducting entertaining challenges.

On the Wassabi Productions/Guava Juice YouTube channel, Alex and Roi often talk straight into the camera at their viewers and speak to them as if their viewers were in the room. For example, in the episode where Alex and Roi sing a song and teach their audience about how to make a Nutella sandwich,<sup>14</sup> they communicate a relationship with their viewers, albeit a virtual one, as evidenced by their use of words such as “friends” when referring to their viewers. Alex and Roi adopt an advisory role when they provide instruction about making a sandwich, creating a second-order effect on their views, such as John Cena. John Cena watched “Panda Song” with his sister, Denise, forming transcontextual joint activity dyad that remains intact across multiple networks.

John Cena often chooses to perform the song “7 Years” using the karaoke machine. He previously learned the song from a friend<sup>15</sup> who showed him the song on YouTube and transferred interesting knowledge which created a second-order effect from the past that influences his choices at the shelter. He hopes I will come back with the

<sup>14</sup> Wassabi Productions YouTube Channel: “Making A Nutella Sandwich.” Accessed on October 6, 2019: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=INO3PF1F00k&list=PLfjYzxfvDioosJtbCWtw6hfynJEPnHAXY>

<sup>15</sup> It is unknown whether the friend resided at the shelter or another location.

karaoke machine and practices all night (listens to the song on YouTube) so he can sing it with the karaoke machine when I come; the song options on the karaoke machine and my presence have a second-order effect on his music choices.

John Cena's immediate family microsystem, the *closed social network* includes his mother, Verona; sister, Denise; and his absent father. Verona listens to a variety of songs using her smart phone and sang in the church choir, which may create a dyadic connection with Verona through her music if John Cena associates the music she listens to or sings with his mother. She indirectly links him to a church music network. Verona hopes John Cena will play drums in the marching band in high school, creating a supportive link towards playing in the marching band.

John Cena's absent father played the drums and John Cena is angry that he cannot see his father, indicating a meaningful primary dyad that has fractured. Currently, he claims wants to play the drums because they are loud, and he will be on stage where everyone can see him. However, his father's past music making, and his mother's future hopes for playing drums in the marching band may transform playing the drums into a proximal process that that makes them "proud" of him and strengthens primary dyads between John Cena and his parents.

John Cena and Denise (sister) engage in multiple music activities together when they play "Pikachu," sing karaoke with other children at Hope Corporate, perform in school programs, and watch videos via YouTube. Denise provides a supplemental link as part of the their transcontextual dyad throughout the mesosystem of John Cena's immediate family, extended family, school, and shelter communities.

John Cena sings holiday songs such as “We Wish You A Merry Christmas” and “This Christmas” with his mother, sister, and extended family comprised of grandparents, aunts, and uncles. The proximal process of their shared music experiences strengthens their dyadic connections between the mesosystems of his immediate family, extended family, and his friends at the shelter who join him in singing holiday songs.

At the shelter, John Cena associates me with making music using the karaoke machine and dubs me, “The Karaoke Lady” even when I bring other music activity options, indicating performing on the karaoke machine is a proximal process that facilitates our relationship connection. When we perform together, sometimes with other children, John Cena performs the role of an MC, introducing our songs, such as “7 Years” and “Welcome to My House.” Our mutual music making results in the formation of a joint activity dyad between us and other children who participate in our music making.

Ms. Valerie, myself, and other shelter staff occasionally demonstrate how to hold the microphone correctly and may perform with the children. John Cena and other children often beg for us to “watch me” and put up chairs for us to sit in while they put on their show, developing an affective relationship with John Cena when we provide encouragement or communicate interesting knowledge, such as how to hold the microphone correctly. Ms. Valerie creates opportunities for John Cena to engage in music making, such as clearing the classroom stage for performances or inviting the youth strings ensemble to the Friendship Dance event, indicating a second-order effect on the opportunities for proximal processes to occur. Additionally, when the children played

“Pikachu” and John Cena was hurt, Ms. Valerie helped them figure out a safe way to play the game; instead of pinching each other’s cheeks, they could put their hands on their shoulders. She had a second-order effect on how the game was played, but because she intervened, the children could continue to engage in the proximal process of playing “Pikachu” which connected the children to each other through mutual music engagement.

When John Cena lived in the midwestern United States, his teacher taught him to play the trumpet and provided opportunities to perform in concerts. John Cena overcame his “stage fright” and enjoyed being on the stage where everyone could see him. Music making was a proximal process that fostered his self-worth and connections with other adults who functioned as primary dyads in his life.

John Cena only goes to music class for one semester a year at his school. He does not enjoy music class, saying “All we do is sing.” Their first activity in music class is learning to sing the school song, the music experience chosen for John Cena by his current music teacher and the school administration. While this may be a meaningful proximal process for others, it is not meaningful for John Cena.

His previous encounters with classroom music at his previous school do not align with his current experience. He does not like his music class right now but hopes to play drums on stage in the future. Verona is counting on his current music teacher to prepare him to pursue his dream of playing the drums in the marching band in high school since she cannot afford extra-curricular music lessons.

## **Case Two: Denise (sister of John Cena)**

Denise was a 5<sup>th</sup> grade African-American female who I knew from October 2016 to March 2017. At times, her aggressiveness could be overwhelming, such as when grabbed the microphone from her brother, causing him to fall and hurt his arm (Field notes, December 16, 2016). On another occasion, she walked around the room during snack and homework and screamed “shut up” repeatedly. Yet at other times, Denise assumed helper roles in the Kids Club community. For example, when the children went on the field trip, Denise pulled the cooler on wheels that contained water and snacks. She also helped prepare and serve food for the Friendship Dance on Valentine’s Day.

### **Denise: Microsystem network**

#### ***Denise: Media network.***

Denise consumed music on YouTube channels she accessed through her mother’s phone. During our interviews, she identified her favorite YouTube channels using the application on my smartphone. Favorite YouTube channels, music, and artists/musicians she accessed through the channels included Resident Evil,<sup>16</sup> Cranks,<sup>17</sup> Grandpa,<sup>18</sup> Guava Juice,<sup>19</sup> Drake,<sup>20</sup> and 50 Cent,<sup>21</sup> especially 50 Cent’s song, “N\*\*\*a”. Denise surfed from

<sup>16</sup> Resident Evil Video Game YouTube channel selected by Denise. Accessed on June 1, 2019:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oqE4En1TXY4>

<sup>17</sup> Cranks YouTube videos selected by Denise. Accessed on June 1, 2017:  
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2S7CGceq5tsuhcVyACdA3g>

<sup>18</sup> Grandpa YouTube videos selected by Denise. Accessed on June 1, 2017:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/TheAngryGrandpaShow>

<sup>19</sup> Guava Juice YouTube channel selected by Denise. Accessed on June 1, 2017:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/aynaikoitsroi>

<sup>20</sup> Drake YouTube video selected by Denise. Accessed on June 1, 2017:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/DrakeVEVO>

<sup>21</sup> 50 Cent YouTube video selected by Denise. Accessed on June 1, 2017:  
<https://www.youtube.com/user/50CentMusic>

channel to channel, listening and watching both music and video media. While some of the music she referred to by song title (e.g. “Starboy”), other music she grouped by the artist (e.g. 50 Cent, Resident Evil).

Denise chose songs based on her emotional state. When Denise was happy, she listened to *Resident Evil* songs, although her mother opined that *Resident Evil* was a game or a movie, not a song you listen to. Denise selected YouTube channels with *Resident Evil* movies or trailers, including one link to Top 10 *Resident Evil* songs.

When she was angry, Denise watched the music video “Starboy.”<sup>22</sup> The video begins with a character played by The Weeknd, who murders someone and then trashes their house saying, “Look what you’ve done? I’m a motherfuckin’ starboy.” When Denise was sad, she listened to Red, a rock ‘n’ roll band.<sup>23</sup> The song “Breathe” by Red pleads to a third party to “breathe your life into me.” “Breathe” is an example of the band’s songs that express intense emotions using screamo and driving rhythms characteristic of hard rock ‘n’ roll.

Denise wanted to play songs by 50 Cent and “Panda” (Desiigner) on the keyboard because she knew the songs. Frequently, she played the “Panda Song” on the keyboard using the violin sound. Denise largely engaged in solitary music activities. Whether music listening, music making, or music watching, with a few exceptions Denise interacted with music on her own. I rarely noticed her make music with others, although she did use the karaoke machine with others once or twice, but soon lost interest. The

<sup>22</sup> “Starboy” lyrics. Accessed June 1, 2017: <https://genius.com/The-weeknd-starboy-lyrics>;  
<https://youtu.be/34Na4j8AVgA>

<sup>23</sup> Red YouTube channel selected by Denise. Accessed June 1, 2017: <https://youtu.be/yH-k6tU9Wc>

dotted lines indicate the unknown aspects to links between Denise and her connection to popular music artists and YouTube channel producers.



Figure 5.9. Denise: Media network activities and relationships.

***Denise: Immediate family network.***

Denise accessed YouTube videos using the smartphone her mother provided. Her mother often sang “Take Me to the King”<sup>24</sup> when she was cleaning or doing other things. With her brother, John Cena, Denise watched YouTube channels such as Guava Juice and the Panda Song.<sup>25</sup> Denise and John Cena also played the hand clapping game “Pikachu,” described earlier, which they may have learned by watching any one of the numerous versions on the internet. Like her brother, John Cena, Denise singing with her extended family. For example, at Christmas, her mother ensured they listened to “This Christmas” by Donny Hathaway.<sup>26</sup> Her family also sang songs such as “We Wish You a Merry Christmas” and “The Twelve Days of Christmas.” The dotted lines indicate a fracture in her relationships with her absent father.

<sup>24</sup> “Take Me to the King” YouTube video. Accessed September 1, 2019:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wU3qgPn3bGA>

<sup>25</sup> “The Panda Song” YouTube video. Accessed September 1, 2019:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lsJLLEwUYZM>

<sup>26</sup> “This Christmas” YouTube video. Accessed June 1, 2017:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b9XNyeIJZ2k>



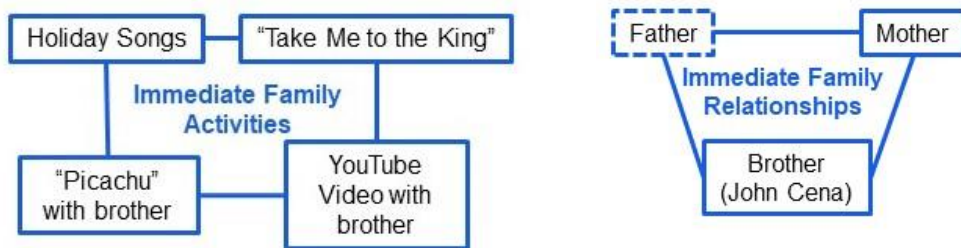


Figure 5.10. Denise: Immediate family network activities and relationships.

***Denise: Extended family network.***

When Denise and her immediate family lived in the Midwest close to other extended family members, they participated in extended family music making. Denise, her mother, and her brother recalled singing “The Twelve Days of Christmas” at family holiday gatherings and “We Wish You A Merry Christmas” when they went to sleep on Christmas. They watched *Frozen* while they made holiday cookies.

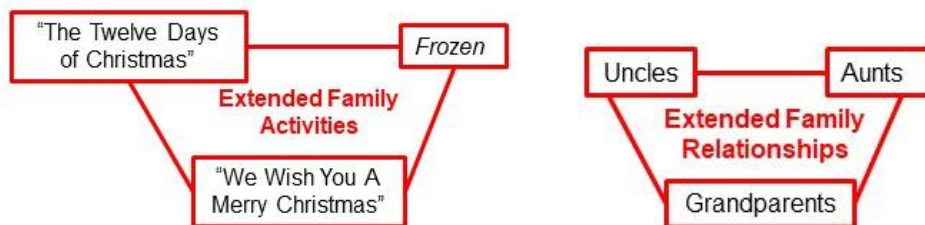


Figure 5.11. Denise: Extended family network activities and relationships.

***Denise: Church community network***

Denise shared that she sang “Take Me to the King”<sup>27</sup> when she went to church in another state; her mother still listened to this song via her smartphone. Denise possibly associated the song with her mother and her previous church. However, Denise was adamant that “Take Me to the King” was not her favorite song; she preferred “Resident Evil” songs. The dotted lines indicate the unknown strength and meaning of activities and relationships.

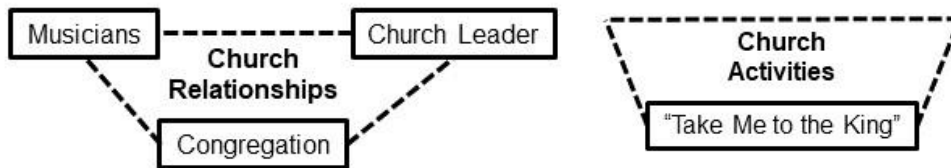


Figure 5.12. Denise: Church community network activities and relationships.

***Denise: Shelter community network.***

While in the Kids Club of the Hope Corporate shelter, Denise mostly engaged with music through playing the keyboard or using the iPad. When Denise played the keyboard, she often used a violin sound because “it has some beats to it, and it stops and a lot of things.” She sometimes played the “Panda Song,” she learned from YouTube, on the keyboard.

While Denise preferred to make music alone, at times she wanted to make music with Wild Fire and Fire Star, two other children in the study, because she perceived they

<sup>27</sup> “Take Me to the King” on YouTube. Accessed on June 1, 2017: <https://youtu.be/wU3qgPn3bGA>

excelled at singing. From her perspective, “they know music.” She also wanted to listen to music with a boy who lived in the shelter but who was not part of Kids Club.

When a visiting string group performed at the Friendship Dance, Denise did not like any of the songs they played but liked “when [the ensemble members] give out candy.” Denise suggested that people should bring twenty violins to Kids Club and sell them to get toys, even though the toys she named were available at Kids Club.



Figure 5.13. Denise: Shelter community network activities and relationships.

***Denise: School community network.***

At her previous school located in the midwestern United States, Denise reported that she sang in school productions, which included Christmas music and other songs. She also played the violin through the school music program. Denise liked the violin because it produced sounds that she could play at different tempos, and fast songs because they were happy. She described making a connected sound, which she liked: “It can go, like, the strings can connect to each other and then it makes a sound.” Denise thought that other people should play the violin because then they could be in a violin show: “I would say it’s pretty good, and people will say it’s pretty good too” (Interview, December 28, 2016).

Currently, at school at the time of this study, Denise reported that her class only learned to sing the school song during their music time. She thought that she should be able to get good grades in music and help pass out instruments such as “sticks and things.” Violin study did not seem to be an option. Her mother, Verona, hoped that she could play the violin in the future. The dotted lines indicate either fracture of links to music opportunities or relationships that are weakly linked with an unknown quality.

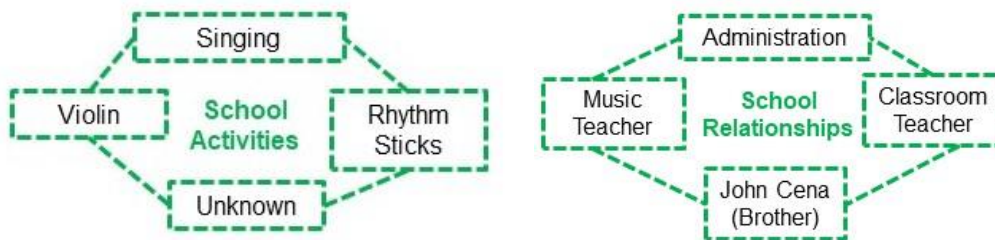


Figure 5.14. Denise: School community network activities and relationships.

**Denise: Mesosystem networks.**

Most of the interesting communication and knowledge Denise received from interactions on the internet, such as new songs or ideas about engaging with music. The *direct social network* was comprised of her mother and her brother, and their music interests, was present across multiple networks including Denise’s media, immediate family, extended family, shelter, and church network. Second-order networks across multiple primary networks that may or may not have direct contact with Denise included her school network and district network. Denise never mentioned her father in any way.

Denise and her immediate family conducted joint activities within her media network. Her mother ensured access to YouTube and her brother occasionally watched

videos with her, providing an avenue for *interesting communication* to occur. Other interesting information transferred between settings when, for example, shelter staff communicated with parents about music performance events in the Kids Club, or when conversations occurred between Denise and her mother about experiences in other networks such as videos she watched on YouTube or music experiences she encountered at school.

If I drew lines to illustrate the mesosystems, I might connect extended family activities singing holiday songs with immediate family activities. I would also connect Denise’s music media activities with those she chose to engage in at the shelter and at home with her brother. I also could connect the song she remembers from church to memories of music activities with her mother. Her relationship with her brother John Cena connects across multiple networks.

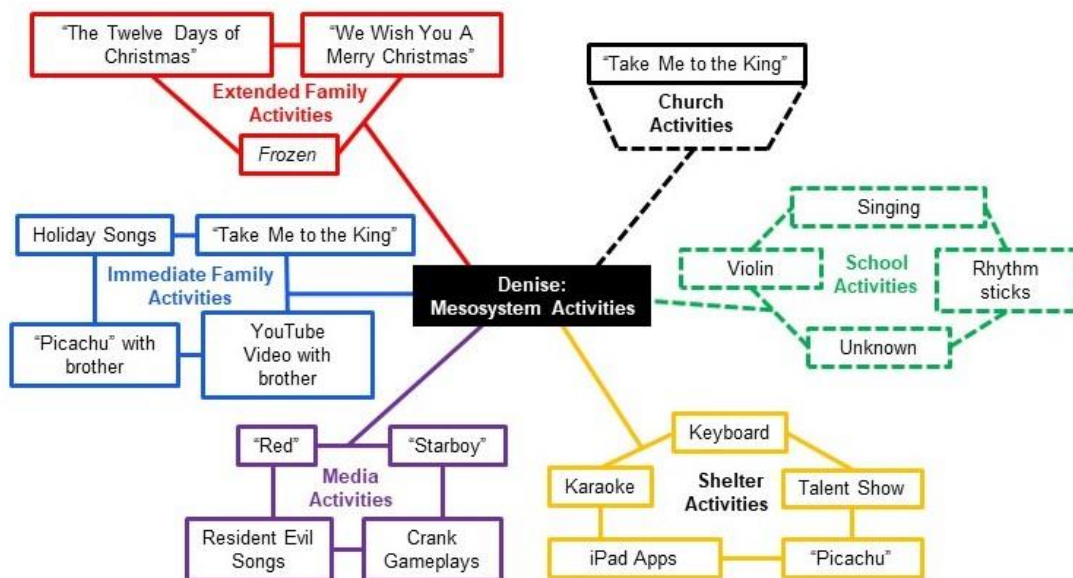


Figure 5.15. Denise: Mesosystem network activities.

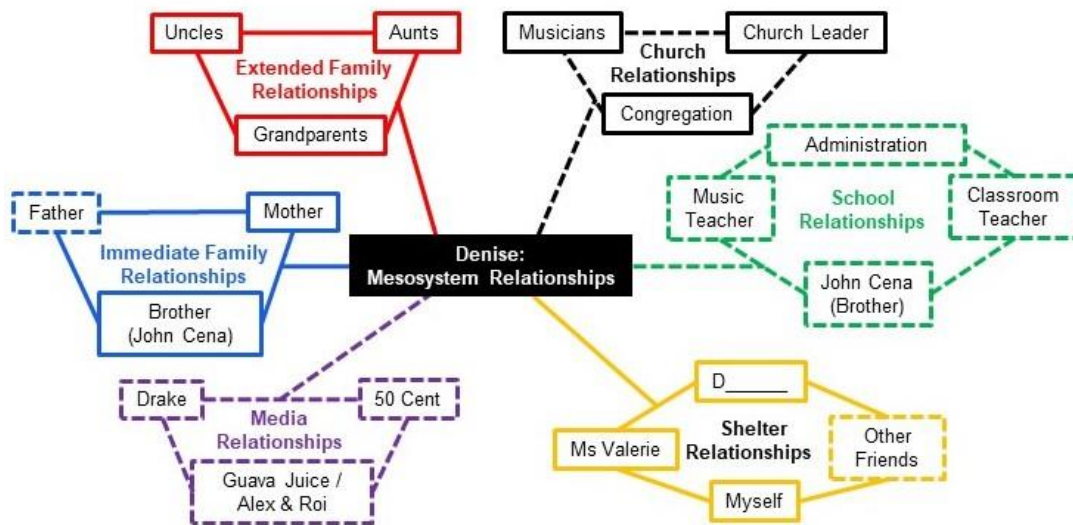


Figure 5.16. Denise: Mesosystem network relationships.

### Denise: Network Analysis

Denise spends a lot of her free time at home and at the shelter watching videos on YouTube, fostering a dyad between herself and virtual media through engagement in molar activities that, when repeated, become proximal process that reinforce the meaning she has for these activities. At Kids Club, she watches “Starboy” (Wknd) and the “Panda Song” (Designer) she learned from YouTube, on the keyboard, which is meaningful enough for her to memorize and try to play on an instrument on her own, making performance of the *Panda Song* a molar activity. Denise does not distinguish between her experience of music and video games. The music from the *Resident Evil* game play YouTube channels is one of her favorite songs. The only person she wants to listen to music with is a boy who lives at the shelter, making music listening a potentially molar activity. The more Denise plays “Pikachu” with her brother and others across a variety of networks, the more that hand-clapping game became a molar activity, developing

meaning in Denise's musical life and becomes a proximal process that establishes connections with others.

Her virtual dyads connect her to other people and activities in a mesosystem across her media, immediate family, and shelter networks. For example, Denise and other children performed "Starboy" for the Kids Club variety show. In another example, Denise and her brother, John Cena, watch YouTube channels together at home, such as the video of Alex and Roi make a Nutella sandwich on the Guava Juice/Wassabi Productions channel.

Denise, Verona, John Cena, and their extended family (e.g. grandmother, aunt, and uncle) enjoying singing songs together during the winter holiday season. They assign particular songs to certain actions; they watch *Frozen* when they make cookies and they sing "We Wish You A Merry Christmas" before bed. Songs are intertwined with the proximal processes reenacted every holiday season that solidify the dyadic connections formed across the mesosystem of the Denise's immediate family, extended family, and any other network that performs those songs during the holidays.

In her previous school community, Denise played the violin in the strings ensemble, which could illustrate a strong dyadic connection between Denise and her previous music teacher. However, she does not appear interested in listening to the strings ensemble perform at the Friendship Dance. Additionally, her current wish is for donations of violins so the children could sell the violins and buy more toys, indicating a weaker dyadic link. In her current music class, instead of only singing, Denise believes that her current music teacher should allow children to play instruments more, such as

rhythm sticks, and let her pass out the instruments. She assumes that everyone should receive the grade of an “A” in music class. Denise’s macrosystem of beliefs and assumptions about music class indicates that an observational dyad (supported by the local exosystem) formed between Denise and her previous school music teacher that was strong enough to influence her thinking about the components of a music class. In contrast, she currently only attends a music class during the spring semester and cannot recall any activities.

### **Case Three: Wild Fire**

Wild Fire was an African-Hispanic-American female in the fifth grade who stayed at Hope Corporate from December 2016-January 2017. She wore glasses and sported short curly brown hair. Wild Fire smiled frequently and showed enthusiasm for all Kids Club activities, including using the karaoke machine and other music engagements. She lived at Hope Corporate with her mother and two little sisters at home, a baby and a one-year old girl; another sister lived with a different parent. She liked singing and science and wanted to study more science at school but said she focused on math, reading, and writing due to testing.

Wild Fire and Fire Star were Co-Presidents after the Kids Club following elections Ms. Valerie arranged, and they often engaged in activities together. They could often be found singing together or engaged in similar joint activities. Wild Fire frequently sang karaoke with Fire Star, rarely singing by herself. The girls performed a variety of songs ranging from “Let It Go” from *Frozen*, to “Cake By the Ocean” to “Rudolph, the Red-nosed Reindeer.” Wild Fire and Fire Star were excited about their public school



dance, showing me some of their moves. Wild Fire's optimistic, open, smiling, bright persona contrasted with Fire Star's closed persona and dark moods.

During our interview, Wild Fire sat in a big comfy leather maroon chair while [Fire Star] sat on the other one. Denise also was present for some of the interview with the permission of Wild Fire. Wild Fire's mother arrived about 10 minutes after we began, which shortened our time together, and so I planned to gain more in-depth information I at a later interview, but Wild Fire and her family left Hope Corporate shortly thereafter.

Wild Fire enthusiastically shared about her music making and the people in her life. She experienced music making at home with her immediate family, at school, and with friends who also lived in the shelter. Due to time constraints both during our single interview and her move shortly after our time together, I was not able to more extensively discover that rationale behind her choices.

**Wild Fire: Microsystem network and analysis.**

***Wild Fire: Media network.***

From an early age of four or five, Wild Fire started learning songs and kept on learning them. Wild Fire wanted to be a singer and a scientist when she grew up. Music, she said, particularly "the beat, the rhythm, the voice, how you can get to the pitch and how you can get to the low pitch," made her feel happy. She listened to music on the radio, her mom's phone, or sang songs inside her head and often sang to herself in the bathroom. At night, she liked to go to sleep to her mother's CD that contained "old songs." She especially liked songs by Drake and Beyoncé, particularly mentioning the songs "Stressed Out" and "Heaven."

Wild Fire also listened to country music and wanted to sing country songs because she liked their “expression,” She continued, “Some country songs are happy, mad. Just the way their expression that got me into the mood of singing. . . I like the sad and the happy ones. . . I can only remember the beat.” Later, I learned that Wild Fire’s mother often listened to country music. The dotted lines indicate the unknown quality of Wild Fire’s media relationships.

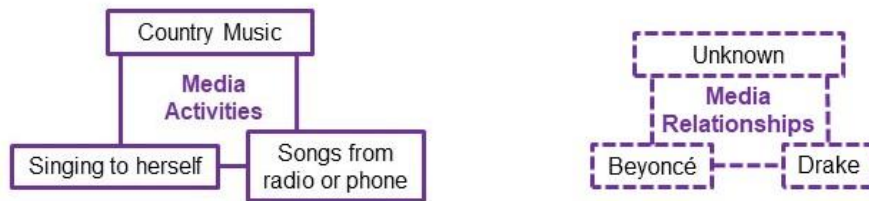


Figure 5.17. Wild Fire: Media music network activities and relationships.

***Wild Fire: Immediate family network.***

Wild Fire explained that she often sang songs such as *Row*, “Row, Row, Your Boat” or “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” to her younger cousins or her baby sister. She also taught them her favorite popular music songs such as “Drunk in Love” (Beyoncé), which she found on YouTube. If she was on a stage performing somewhere, Wild Fire explained that would sing sang “Drunk in Love” because it reminds her of her mother: “It’s all about love, and how my mom is. She loves me, my brother, and my sisters, and her family too.” Wild Fire did not previously sing this song for her mother because her mother did not like the “new year songs” from 2014 or 2016. Her mother’s preference for

country songs and “old-fashioned songs” may have influenced Wild Fire’s interest in country music.

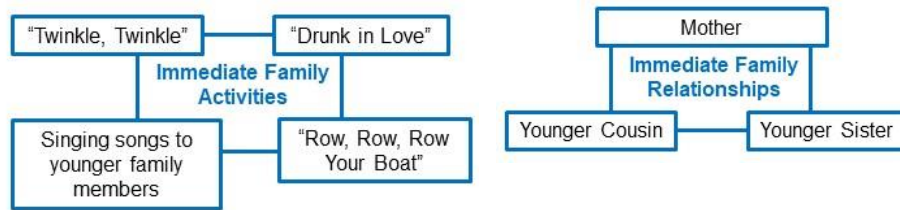


Figure 5.18. Wild Fire: Immediate family network activities and relationships.

***Wild Fire: Shelter community network.***

Wild Fire was not at the shelter long enough to participate in some of the music activities, such as the variety show, however, she associated music experiences with building friendships with others: “How I feel about music is heart warm, like people actually want to be friends with me, like my friend Fire Star.”

Wild Fire often grabbed the mic on the karaoke machine to sing with Fire Star. Even Denise was willing to engage in a music activity if Wild Fire was part of the activity because, from Denise’s perspective, Wild Fire “knew music.” One day, Ms. Valerie allowed Wild Fire and Fire Star to explore some of the DVDs in the “library.” The two children, who both loved to sing, selected a DVD that was a video of a country music concert

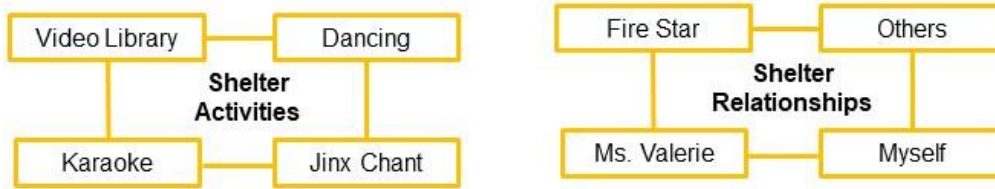


Figure 5.19. Wild Fire: Shelter community network activities and relationships.

***Wild Fire: School community network.***

Wild Fire reported that in a previous school she played the trumpet, although later in our conversations she shared that she played the violin, not the trumpet. She planned to perform in a concert in December for friends and family at that school but could not perform because she moved to Hope Corporate. At her previous school, She also said that at her previous school, she participated in a rock band where students could sing their own songs and create their own band. In the future, Wild Fire wanted to play the guitar, the microphone, the drum, and the keyboard so she could have her own band.

Wild Fire shared that she made music with friends at her current school only a little bit, moving her hand from side to side when I asked her about music with friends at school. She had started music classes with a new music teacher (shared by John Cena and Denise) the previous Monday. In contrast to John Cena and Denise, who spoke disparagingly about their music class because it was “just singing,” Wild Fire proclaimed enthusiasm for the experience and even performed their newly learned school song for me, “Go Bears.”

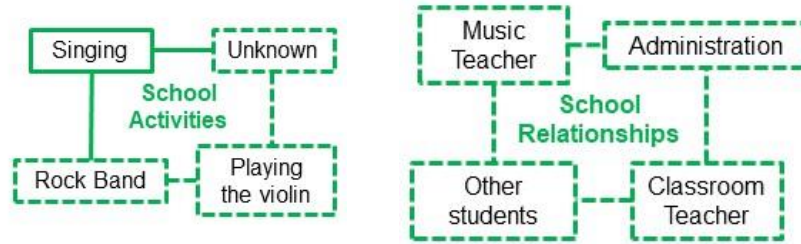


Figure 5.20. Wild Fire: School community network activities and relationships.

**Wild Fire: Mesosystem networks.**

When I first asked her why she liked country music, she could not tell me information about anyone else in her life who liked country. Later, I found out her mother only listened to country music which connected her personal music and her immediate family network. Potentially, Wild Fire’s love of country music could foster the development of future dyads and primary links across networks.

If I were to draw lines to connect Wild Fire’s mesosystems, I would draw connections between the activities she engaged in during her media activities and those she participated in at Hope Corporate. I might also connect Wild Fire’s affinity for country music with the relationships between Wild Fire and her mother.

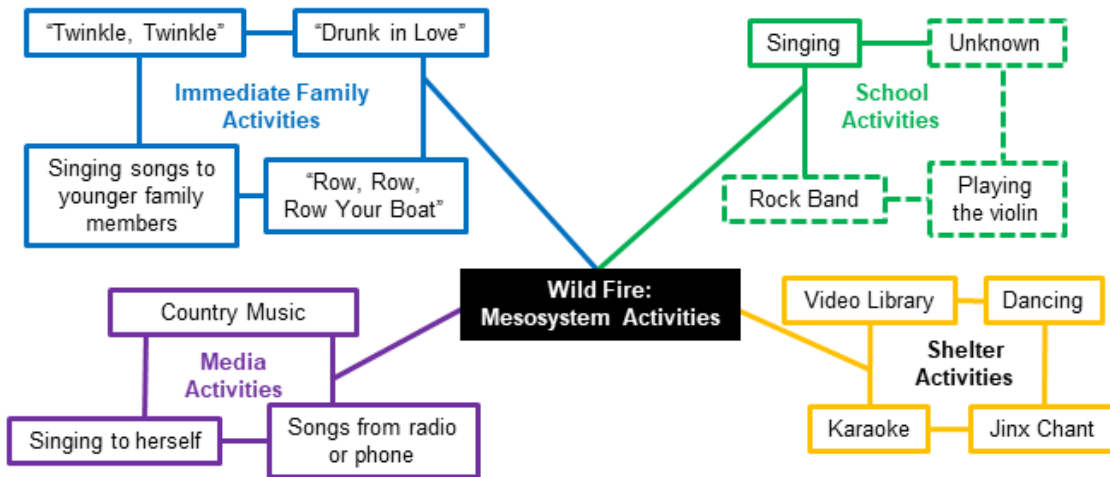


Figure 5.21. Wild Fire: Mesosystem network activities.

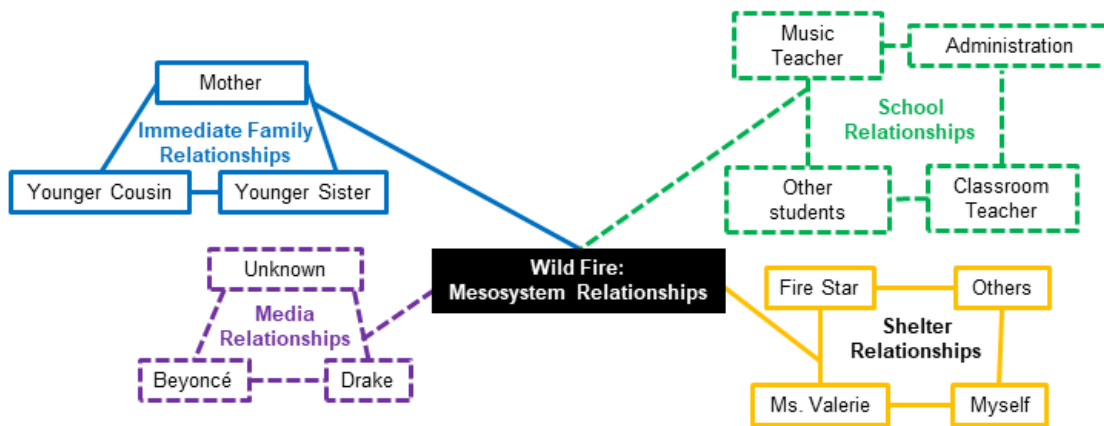


Figure 5.22. Wild Fire: Mesosystem network relationships.

**Wild Fire: Network analysis.**

Wild Fire interactions with music are molar activities due to consistent engagement. Wild Fire perceives music experiences as molar activities evidenced by her association of music experiences with building friendships with others: “How I feel about

music is heart warm, like people actually want to be friends with me like my friend [Fire Star].”

Wild Fire listens to a variety of popular music styles on her mother’s phone or on the radio that include country music and contemporary R&B. She also sings to herself in the shower and at other times. Even though more time is needed to determine specific media relationships, Wild Fire consistently listens to Beyoncé and Drake, forming a dyad with artists whose songs are an integral part of expressing how she feels and her perspectives on the world.

Wild Fire’s mother, a primary link, makes it possible for her to listen to music on her smart phone, CDs, and the radio, indicating a supportive link for music engagement. They both enjoy listening to country music, indicating that her mother may have an affective relationship on Wild Fire’s music preferences. Wild Fire, in turn, sings songs to her little sister and cousin, such as “Drunk in Love” that expresses what she imagines her mother feels for her children. The children also dance and sing together in joint activity dyads. Music strengthens her primary dyadic relationships with her mother, sister, and cousin and provides a vehicle to express emotions and care for each other. Wild Fire does not specifically connect her mother’s country music listening to her own interest. If Wild Fire only listens to country music as a passing fixation, her country music listening is a mere molecular activity. If she listens to country music, consciously or unconsciously to connect with her mother, then her country music listening is a molar activity.

At the shelter, Wild Fire forms relationships quickly with others in the shelter. She knows some of the children from school. Even Denise is willing to engage in a music

activity if Wild Fire was part of the activity because, from Denise's perspective, Wild Fire "knew music."

She also actively joins Fire Star to sing using the karaoke machine, dresses up with Fire Star to dance to the radio, and warmly smiles during her interactions with other children. A primary dyad develops between Wild Fire and Fire Star that provides Fire Star with a relationship connection that prompts Fire Star to stay in Kids Club after she was old enough to move to the after-school care for teenagers.

Wild Fire's enthusiasm about her engagement in music class at school make the experience a molar activity. Previously, a friend from another community taught Wild Fire few songs on the violin, forming an observational dyad that influenced Wild Fire to join her school's strings program. At her past school, Wild Fire was in a strings ensemble class and rehearsed to perform on the violin for the school winter concert, a proximal process that often fosters long lasting music connections. Wild Fire excitedly describes her current music class, she performs the school song for me including the chant at the end. Her enthusiasm indicates the formation of an observational dyad with her music teacher and a joint activity dyad with her classmates. Conversely, John Cena and Denise attend music classes with the same teacher and do not speak positively about their current music classroom experience. It is unclear the reason for the difference in perspectives; one child enjoys the music class and forms a positive dyadic relationship, while the other two children share the opposite perspective. More information is needed to determine the influence of her current exosystem (administration and music teacher) on music



opportunities. Her school community is interrupted when she moves once again (Wild Fire attended three different schools throughout the school year 2016-2017).

#### **Case Four: Fire Star**

Fire Star was a tentative, white female who was in sixth grade and whom I knew from September 2017 to March 2017. She lived at Hope Corporate with her mother, father, and brothers; her younger brother was part of Kids Club. She was technically too old for Kids Club at the time of the study but was allowed to stay in Kids Club until she was ready to move to the teen program. Fire Star often looked around sharply like she was ready for something to happen or was in a "bad mood" about something, carrying the weight of the world on her shoulders. She occasionally went to the "cracker table" to eat crackers even though she previously ate her snack. Fire Star met with a therapist throughout her time at Kids Club. She liked school in general but was morose one day because a teacher separated Fire Star and her friends, the only individuals who made her feel comfortable in that class.

Fire Star was the Co-President with Wild Fire during the brief time Wild Fire was at Hope Corporate. When the Co-Presidents chose the colors for the class flag, Fire Star initially chose black as one of the colors "because of the darkness we all feel sometimes." Eventually, Fire Star started to come out of her shell and provide leadership. For example, when the class hosted a talent show, Fire Star instructed all of the children in their code names and their stage set-up saying, "Everyone tell each other your code name" and "John Cena's going to be in the middle." On another day, a new child came to

take a tour of Kids Club. Fire Star conducted the tour using a flip chart created for her by Ms. Valerie.

Fire Star chose her pseudonym from the name of a cat in a texting club. Figures 6.20 and 6.21 illustrate two collages she made about music in the fall of 2016 and spring of 2017. The meaning of music for Fire Star was “Happiness, awesomeness, and music.” Although she was at Hope Corporate for several months and I had many opportunities to observe her and talk with her informally, ten minutes into our first structured interview, Fire Star’s father arrived to pick her up. Fire Star and she lamented that she didn’t get to perform (during our interview) and would not tell me the song she wanted to sing, saying it was a secret. Wild Fire, with whom she made friends at Hope Corporate, moved shortly after our interview, and Fire Star never wanted to interview again.

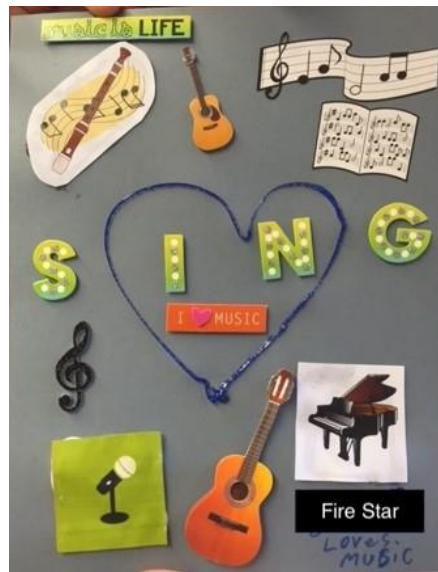


Figure 5.23. Fire Star: Collage created in fall of 2016.



Figure 5.24. Fire Star: Collage created in spring of 2017.

**Fire Star: Microsystem networks.**

***Fire Star: Media network.***

Fire Star listened to pop music either on YouTube at the shelter or on a CD when she was with her immediate family in her brother’s room. Taylor Swift figured prominently in her listening preferences. She described the lyrics for a song about a pick-up truck that “you won’t let me drive” from “Picture to Burn” (Taylor Swift). At the shelter, Fire Star watched videos on YouTube such as “I Knew You Were Trouble” (Taylor Swift) and “I’m Only Me With You” (Taylor Swift). Singing was her favorite way to make music and made her reflect about the relationships and meaning in her life: “The song. I like to think about the people I love in life. All of the friends I love. My family. I think about myself, and I think about how I should make the world a better place with music.” When Fire Star sang with the karaoke machine, she sang both by

herself and with others. Fire Star also used both iMaschine and Garage Band to make music, but only on her own, without others.

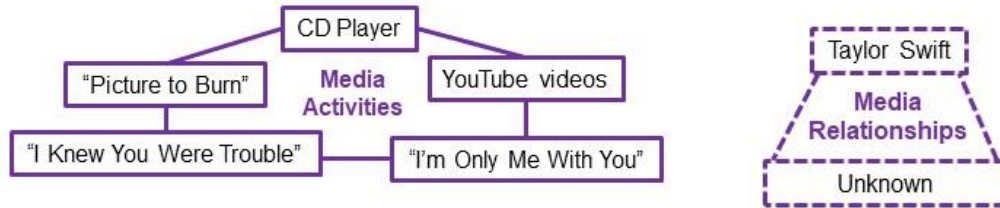


Figure 5.25. Fire Star: Media network activities and relationships.

***Fire Star: Immediate family network.***

Fire Star’s mother played the violin in school but did not like it because the teacher was “a prick and dropped [her] from the class.” Her mother listened to music from metal to country. When her children were little, Fire Star’s mom sang them a lullaby passed down from great-grandmother to grandmother to Fire Star’s mother who, she said, was descended from gypsies based out of Russia.

Nugla Nove, Fire Star’s father, shared that his music teacher wanted him to play the piano, but he played the drums by ear. He joined a formal music ensemble in high school because his teacher required anyone who played an instrument to participate in his mariachi band, something Nugla Nove did not want to do. His favorite music was heavy metal, although he also listened to Bach. Fire Star’s music preferences were very different from her father; however, he supported her by holding up a curtain at the talent show. they did not share any music activities at this time.

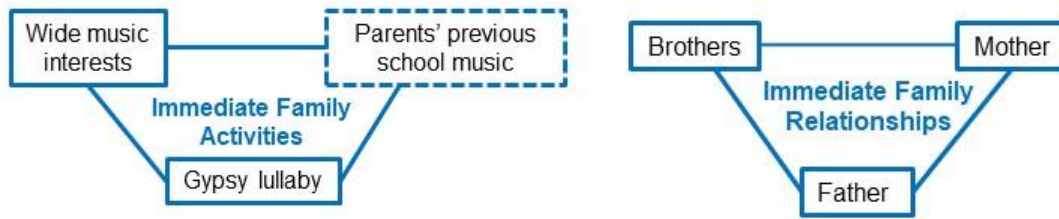


Figure 5.26. Fire Star: Immediate family network activities and relationships.

***Fire Star: Extended family network.***

As reported by her mother, Fire Star’s grandmother and great-grandmother were connected to Gypsy heritage. They sang a Gypsy lullaby to Fire Star’s mother every night before going to sleep, and she sang the same song to Fire Star. Other extended family information was not available.



Figure 5.27. Fire Star: Extended family network activities and relationships.

***Fire Star: Shelter community network.***

Fire Star often wanted to sing with the karaoke machine both by herself, with Wild Fire, and other children. She often helped younger children from Cubs Club sing using the karaoke machine. Wild Fire and Fire Star used song chants during their interactions with each other. On one occasion, Fire Star and Wild Fire spoke the same

thing at the same time and then chanted the rhyme: “Jinx double jinx black out you owe me a soda.”

When the class hosted a talent show, Fire Star instructed all of the children in their code name and their set up saying: "Everyone tell each other your code name" and "John Cena's going to be in the middle" (Field notes, January 20, 2017). Fire Star sang a solo, I Feel It Coming, and then did some lip syncing to *Starboy* with Denise and John Cena.

Fire Star played the piano and shared songs she knew, such as her version of “Hot Cross Buns” in reverse and “Mary Had A Little Lamb” (Field notes, December 19, 2016). Later, when I started to bring my iPad, Fire Star used both iMaschine and Garage Band to make music.

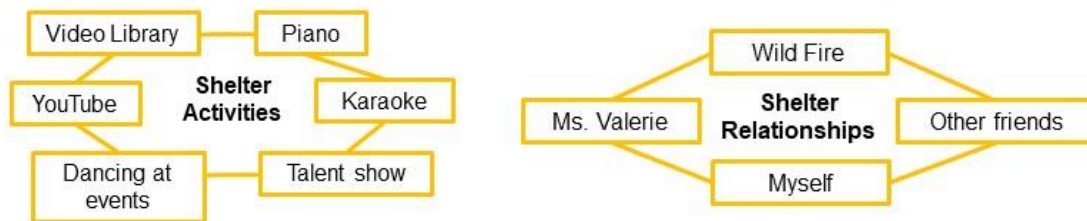


Figure 5.28. Fire Star: Shelter community network activities and relationships.

***Fire Star: School community network.***

Fire Star never talked about engaging in music at school outside of participation in the school dance. She wanted to play the piano and wished she could sing in choir like her friends. Her father made it clear that Fire Star sang often at home and that he wanted to support whatever she wanted to do in music. Fire Star never mentioned that she wanted

to participate in a strings class at school. Her father mentioned the possibility and maintained that Fire Star could not be in a strings program because he could not afford the financial responsibility for the violin if something happened to the instrument. The dotted lines indicate the missing opportunities for activities and lack of relationships links in Fire Star’s school community network.

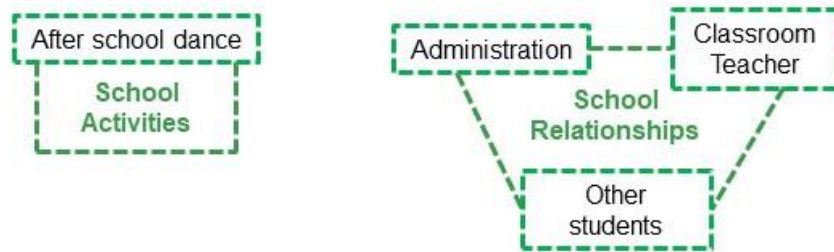


Figure 5.29. Fire Star: School community network activities and relationships.

**Fire Star: Mesosystem network.**

Fire Star received interesting communication from media sources about music artists, which she sometimes shared with Wild Fire. Fire Star had connections across networks between her immediate family and extended family. She also had connections between the activities she enacted in her media network and her activities she chose in her shelter network. While her family networks were closed social networks, all other networks were incomplete, and sometimes absent, networks.

If I were to draw lines to depict Fire Star’s mesosystems, I would connect her immediate and extended family networks, bonded through passing down the “gypsy lullaby” from one generation to the next. I would also connect her media activities with those she chose to engage in at the shelter.

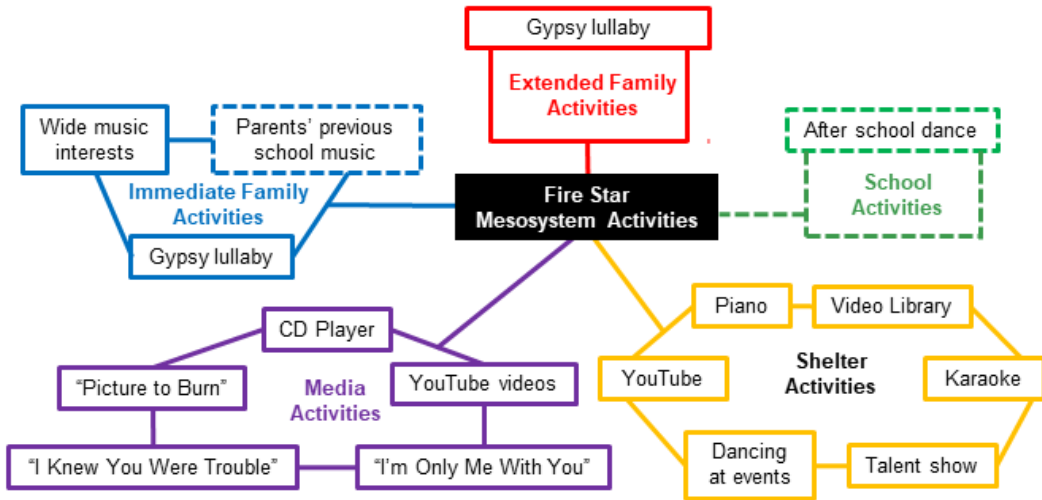


Figure 5.30. Fire Star: Mesosystem Activities.

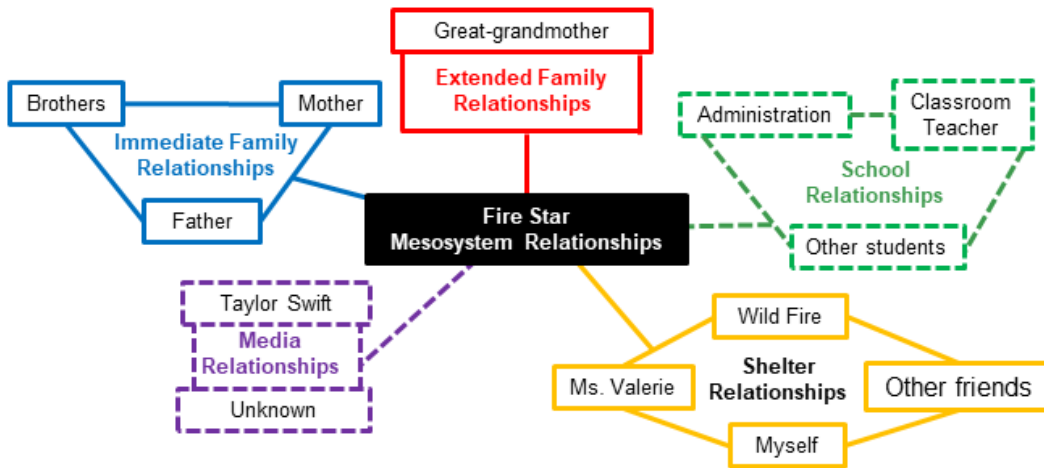


Figure 5.31. Fire Star: Mesosystem Relationships.



### **Fire Star: Network analysis.**

Her determination to learn songs on the piano raised value to a molar activity. Listening to or singing songs became a molar activity because through engagement with music she could express her inner life and desire for connection with others and her hope for the world.

Fire Star watches Taylor Swift YouTube videos multiple times during free time at Kids Club, forming a virtual dyad with Taylor Swift's songs. When Wild Fire starts coming to Hope Corporate, they watch Taylor Swift videos on YouTube and watch other country music performers on videos in the Hope Corporate library. Taylor Swift, all of the personnel that produce her videos, and Taylor Swift fans create an exosystem that influences both the content and platform Fire Star can access.

At the shelter, Wild Fire and Fire Star are an inseparable primary dyad who do everything together while they were both there. They are Co-Presidents and share responsibilities to accomplish specific tasks together, such as tours for new children and other jobs as assigned by Ms. Valerie. Both children sing together, play together, eat sitting next to each other, and work together. Fire Star stays at Kids Club past her 12th birthday because she wants to stay in the community with Wild Fire, a positive affective relationship that provides stability through proximal processes that solidify their bond. Because Fire Star is older and one of the Presidents, other children look to her for leadership at the talent show and during other activities. Although she engages in proximal processes with that could promote dyadic connections, they are not meaningful enough to stay in Kids Club. When Wild Fire moves away and the dyad dissolves, Fire

Star chooses not to participate in interviews with me and soon decides to move up the teen program at the shelter.

Fire Star continues to listen to country music on CDs at when she is with her family in their apartment at Hope Corporate. Her father has a wide interest in a variety of musical styles but does not like her country songs. Fire Star's mother often sings her a Gypsy lullaby, passed down from her great-grandmother to her grandmother to her mother and likely Fire Star will sing this song to her children. The Gypsy lullaby creates a mesosystem connection that lasts for generations. Her father believes she will be a good singer if she keeps practicing: "She's my daughter and I'm biased but I think if she keeps practicing, she will have a pretty good voice. Apparently, she didn't get her mother's tone deafness" (March 3, 2017).

Both her father and mother tried to participate in music ensembles in high school but were not able to form lasting relationships with their directors, they were weakly linked to ensemble music. Her father cannot accept the financial responsibility for instruments, even if they are free, preventing a secondary music class network from formation. Her parents' experience with school ensembles and financial straits have a negative second-order effect on potential linkage. Although Fire Star admits a desire to be in choir, like her friends, she is not part of any school music activity (aside from joining in the school dance).

#### **Case Five: Kat**

Kat was an African-American/White female in the fourth grade who spoke with a slight southern drawl. I knew her for one month from late January to late February of

2017. She lived at Hope Corporate with her mother, younger sister, and younger cousin. Her dark hair was shaved on one side and then smoothed over to the other side in a fun, spunky style. She selected her pseudonym because it was her password at school. Kat enjoyed school, saying that she thought school helped her brain grow stronger. She wanted to be a teacher when she grew up, starting as a second-grade teacher and later teaching fifth grade to challenge herself. She envisioned herself using music in her future classroom and thought she would play music while her future students took a test.

**Kat: Microsystem networks.**

***Kat: Media network.***

Kat often listened to music in the company of others, not isolated on her own. She did listen to music in response to her emotions or described using music parallel to emotions. When she was happy, Kat listened to music on the radio; she listened to rap when she was angry. The radio station she preferred played music by artists such as Miley Cyrus, Pharrell Williams, One Direction, and Katy Perry. The local website she said she listened to included listening options, music, news, and radio contests. At night, Kat listened to the radio to help her fall asleep. The dotted lines indicate unknown relationship links in Kat’s media network.

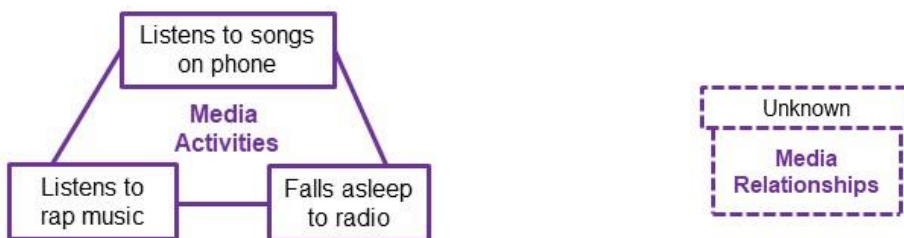


Figure 5.32. Kat: Media network activities and relationships.

***Kat: Immediate family network.***

Kat's best friends were her younger sister and brother, along with four step-brothers who did not live with her. Kat enjoyed singing and dancing along to the radio, their primary source for music listening: "I just like to hold my sister's hand and dance." Kat shared multiple song preferences for music engagement with her family. Although they were willing to listen to any songs on the radio, "Closer" (Chainsmokers)<sup>28</sup> was one of their favorite songs. Kat, her sister, and her sister's friend created their own dance to go with this song. The songs "I Hate You, I Love You" (Gnash),<sup>29</sup> and "One Call Away" (Charlie Puth)<sup>30</sup> also made her list of favorites saying, "We just liked it. And we all knew the words, so we just danced to it and we hug, and we would dance while we listen to it and we sing to it." Kat described the meaning of the song, "One Call Away," and likely watched the video, which aligns with her interpretation of the song: "The girl she has a different boyfriend, but the guy likes her and she says that her boyfriend's a bad boyfriend and he says that it's only one call away to call him if you need anything."

Kat played the violin in her school ensemble, described later. Other people in Kat's family also either played or wanted to play music instruments. Her mother played the violin and the cello. Her brother played the bass clarinet at school, an instrument that Kat thought sounded very loud. Her sister wanted to play the violin but had to wait until

<sup>28</sup> "Closer" YouTube video. Accessed June 1, 2017: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PT2\\_F-1esPk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PT2_F-1esPk)

<sup>29</sup> "I Hate You, I Love You" YouTube video. Accessed June 1, 2017:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BiQIc7fG9pA>

<sup>30</sup> "One Call Away" YouTube video. Accessed June 1, 2017:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BxuY9FET9Y4>

she was in fourth grade. Kat’s mother thought her sister should play a different instrument, so everyone in the family could play something different.

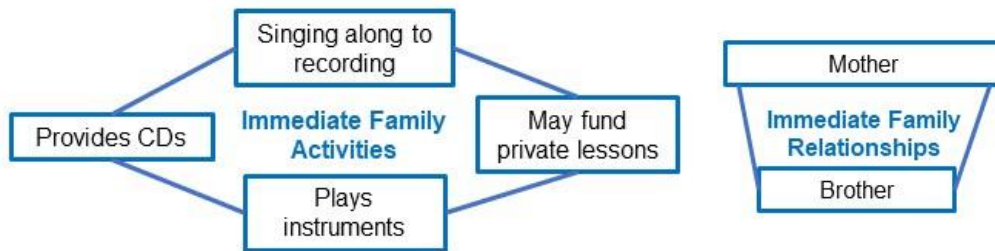


Figure 5.33. Kat: Immediate family network activities and relationships.

***Kat: Shelter community network.***

On her first day at Hope Corporate, Kat sang and danced along to the radio, an indication that she wanted to engage in music activities. While she was at Kids Club, she enjoyed making beats using the iPad application iMaschine. Fire Star and Kat wanted to use their favorite application, Smule Sing, but it did not work without access to WIFI, which was not available at that time.

On some days, Kat arrived from school with a violin case along with the rest of her school books. On the day of the Friendship Dance at Hope Corporate, a string ensemble comprise of youth from Title I schools performed for the Hope Corporate community. The performers prepared to host a strings instrument petting zoo while the children and I waited, seated at a round table. Kat was excited about the instrument petting zoo and proudly stated that she could play *Mary Had A Little Lamb* on her violin. One of the boys at the table challenged her, stating that he did not believe she could play

on the violin. Kat stood up, straightened her back, and threw him a defiant look emphatically stating, “When my violin gets here, I’m going to show you I can play it!” Kat did play “Mary Had A Little Lamb” on the violin at the instrument petting zoo, but with difficulty because she was not used to that particular instrument.

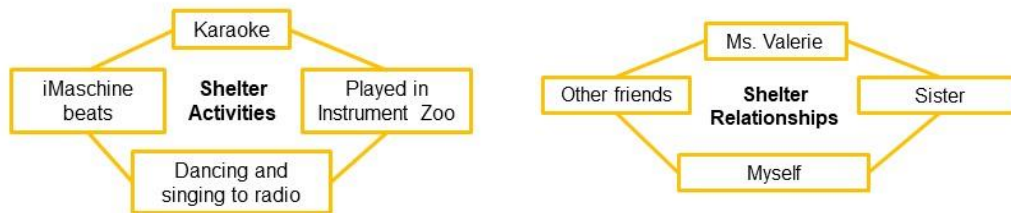


Figure 5.34. Kat: Shelter community network activities and relationships.

***Kat: School community network.***

Kat had played in the school orchestra since the fall of 2016, and our interactions at Hope Corporate occurred early in 2017. Kat became interested in playing the violin because of the influence of a friend:

It's because my friend she plays violin and I started messing with it and she taught me. And I thought, “Oh, I'll just try it out in school.: We came to her house. She doesn't go to the same school. She goes to (one school). We go to (another school). But she had a violin, but I thought it was a violin, but it was really a viola. So, I started just playing the violin.

Kat did not want to wait until fifth grade to play a music instrument, so started playing the violin in the orchestra in fourth grade. Once she was part of the orchestra, the school administration required her to remain in the orchestra class. She liked her orchestra teacher, who was older and close to retirement, saying, “She's creative. She makes up her own ideas and stuff.” Kat was excited about next semester when the

orchestra would go to different schools and “travel around the world and play for them.” She rehearsed on Tuesdays and Thursdays for 15 minutes, 11:45-12:00. She was also supposed to attend a rehearsal for an hour after school on Fridays, however, Kat could never attend the extra weekly rehearsal because her parents did not own a car.

In consultation with Ms. Valerie, I learned that if multiple children need a ride to a particular destination following an after-school activity, the district will provide transportation. However, if there are only a few children who need a ride, parents must provide transportation. Hope Corporate sometimes provided a bus pass for parents, but in order to use the bus pass, the parent must ride the bus to pick up the child and then ride back. The particular bus system in this city did not allow for efficient use of the bus system to all locations. Kat’s school was located in a part of the city that was inconvenient to use the public transportation system. The dotted lines indicate loss of music opportunities and fractures in the relationships of Kat’s school community network.

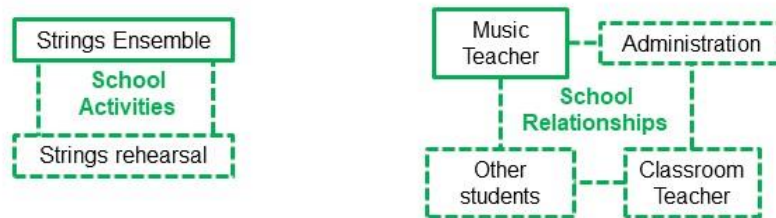


Figure 5.35. Kat: School community network activities and relationships.

**Kat: Mesosystem networks.**

Kat’s mother provided a supportive dual link when she helped Kat establish a connection to her orchestra teacher and supported Kat’s efforts. Her mother may also

have provided interesting knowledge if she coached Kat on her violin playing. She also provided time and space for Kat, her sister, friends, and brother to interact with music on the radio. Kat's orchestra teacher also helped to provide a supportive link when she connected what Kat did in the classroom to what Kat needed to do at home. She may have also conversed with Kat's mother about Kat's violin playing.

Kat and her sister also engaged in their singing and dancing to the radio at home, at the shelter, by themselves, and with their friend. They were able to transfer their interests in this particular music activity across microsystem links, creating a transcontextual dyad. Kat and her sister functioned as a dual link for each other as they used music to make new friends in their new context of Hope Corporate.

If I were to draw lines to depict Kat's mesosystem network, I would connect her media activities with the music activities she engaged in both at home and at the shelter. I would also connect her participation in the strings ensemble at school to playing instruments at home, supported by her mother's interest in her children playing music instruments.



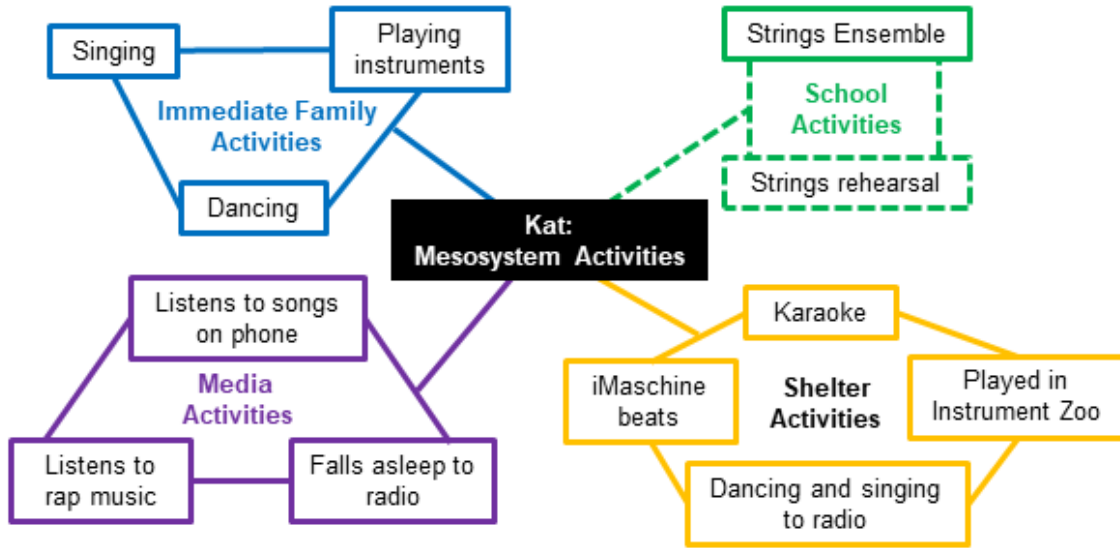


Figure 5.36. Kat: Mesosystem network activities.

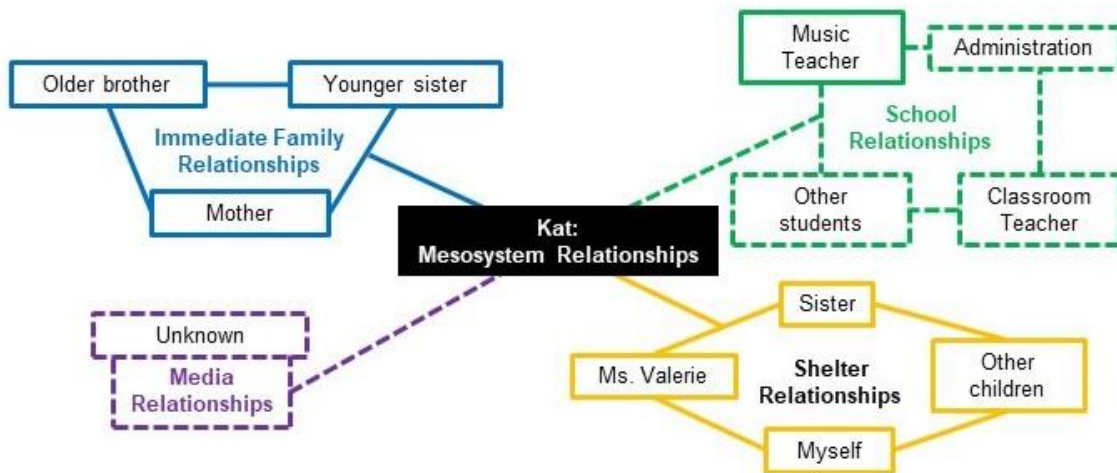


Figure 5.37. Kat: Mesosystem network relationships.

**Kat: Network analysis.**

Because Kat associates rap music with angry feelings, listening to rap is a proximal process she uses to express her anger. Kat consistently listens to the radio to help her fall asleep, making this a molar activity that informs the trajectory of her music interests. Kat listens to songs on the radio throughout her day, and even listens to “oldies” on the radio to go to sleep. While she cannot identify particular artists, she knows the names of some of the songs, such as “One Call Away” and “Chainsmokers.” Her listening habits are determined by the radio producers that selected songs for air play, forming a dyad between Kat and the radio. Kat occasionally views websites to watch music videos, music contests, or get the latest entertainment news. However, her primary source for music listening is the radio.

Kat’s primary direct social network is her immediate family that includes her mother, older brothers, younger sister, and cousin. Her mother provides access to the radio and insists that her children learn to play orchestral instruments, because she played the cello when she was younger. Her brother plays the bass clarinet. Kat’s mother believes that her children should all play different instruments (macrosystem).

Kat, her sister, and her cousin often sing and dance to songs on the radio, making up their own dance moves. This kind of music engagement functions as a proximal process Kat and her sister continue when they start coming to Kids Club. The first time I see Kat and her sister, they are singing and dancing to the radio in the media area. Dancing and singing to the radio are molar activities because they occur in multiple network communities, including both her family and other children at Hope Corporate. I,

myself, create a second-order effect when I provide Kat with opportunities to use particular iPad applications (i.e. iMaschine, Pitch Painter, etc.).

Kat likes her orchestra teacher and admires her teacher's creative ideas (Interview, February 15, 2017), indicating the formation of a primary dyad. She appears to be enthusiastic about learning, however, the only song she knows how to comfortably play after a full semester of classes is "Mary Had A Little Lamb." Kat cannot attend the after-school rehearsals on Fridays due to a lack of transportation. Not only does Kat's lack of attendance at this rehearsal affect her instrument performance, it also prevents Kat from connecting to her school community network.

#### **Case Six: Seara**

Seara was an African-American female who started third grade in the fall of 2017. I knew her from April 2017 to July 2017. She created her own pseudonym because she thought it was beautiful and was very particular about the spelling and pronunciation. At the time of our longest conversation in July, Seara and the rest of Kids Club were preparing for the Hopes and Dreams Gala, where the children performed a song or a skit about being a hero or their hopes and dreams. If Seara could be a superhero, she would be Wonder Woman.

Multiple times I observed Seara cry or argue with another child about a particular conflict between them. At lunch times during the summer months, she wanted me to go with the group and sit with her. During our conversations, she often changed the subject or become distracted easily by my recording devices, her friends, or other children.

Seara's mother, Shaundra, talked about the opportunities she was going to provide for her

children once she got a car and was able to take her children to activities such the water park on the weekend.

When I asked Seara about school, she said she was really good at art because “you get to do different colors and you get to do whatever things you want.” She also wanted to be an artist, a famous one, when she grew up. I frequently found Seara creating hearts and animal shapes using fuse beads, one of the frequent activity options at Hope Corporate. She also explained to me how to finger weave.

**Seara: Microsystem networks.**

***Seara: Media network.***

Likely due to her age, Seara relied on others to either provide opportunities for music making or join her in the music activity. Her music engagement and interests were both facilitated and influenced by others. She did not describe media influences.

***Seara: Immediate family network.***

Most of the time, Seara played a CD to listen to music with her family. Sometimes she listened to music to fall asleep. She learned most of the songs she knew from movies and audiobooks. Seara’s favorite song was “Let It Go” from *Frozen* which she liked to sing by herself. She frequently chose pop songs to listen to at home or perform on the karaoke machine. She could not think of the names of pop songs. Her mother explained that Seara did not know the names of songs because she often listened to the songs on the radio or on a media device and often did not know the title of the song. Because she consistently chose to listen to pop songs, even when she wanted to fall asleep, pop songs may have become a molar activity and framed Seara’s music choices.

With her immediate family, Seara listened to music when her mother turned on the radio. Her mother frequently played KidzBop albums for her children. Seara liked a lot of the Kidz Bop music but could not remember any songs. According to Shaundra, Seara's mother, Seara listened to "Chandelier" (Sia)<sup>31</sup> and usually preferred pop music. Her younger brother in kindergarten often sang "No Limit" (Usher).<sup>32</sup> Shaundra commented on how quickly her son learned a song and marveled at how much both of her children loved music. During family holidays, Seara and her family sometimes sang favorites, such as "We Wish You A Merry Christmas," when they were putting up the Christmas tree.

Shaundra had previously helped Seara play the piano and the guitar. Seara spoke with pride about "the 1-2-3-4-5 song" that Shaundra taught her how to play. Seara liked to play the piano "because it makes beautiful notes." She also wanted to play the violin because it made beautiful sounds, similar to the piano. Seara held specific ideas about how her piano lessons should be conducted:

Researcher: You've wanted to take piano lessons for five hours?

Seara: And I could have a snack.

Researcher: That's how long you would want the lesson for, five hours?

Seara: After the first hour, I'll be hungry, so I'll go get a snack. After the second hour, I'll be thirsty, so I'll go get a drink. After the third hour, I'll be very hungry, so I'll go get dinner. After the fourth hour, and then when I come back from

<sup>31</sup> "Chandelier" on YouTube. Accessed on June 1, 2017: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2vjPBrBU-TM>

<sup>32</sup> "No Limit" on YouTube. Accessed on June 1, 2017: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3w0yqAdJiY>

dinner, I'll go back to my piano lessons. At the fifth hour, I'll have my midnight snack.

Seara wanted to take piano lessons before she came to Hope Corporate, but her mom thought she was too young to play the piano. Shaundra wanted to support her children in all of their endeavors but emphasized that they needed to choose one thing early on and continue with that activity in order to do well later on:

I hope she can continue to do her art and I hope she can continue to flourish intellectually. Right now is a time for them to decide what other sports or what other electives they want to start learning and I want them to be able to nourish that starting now. Like I tell them, whatever it is that you want to do, right now is the time for you to start. . . I cultivate whatever it is. She's my art baby. She's an artist. That's what she wants to be. Baby, you can do whatever you want to do. Whatever you want to be, whatever you want to do, you can do it. First and foremost, your education comes first. You want to do music? Do music. You want to do art? Do art. But one sport always has to be incorporated because they have to be active. . . I was very clear with them, whatever you want to do, you have to see it through completely. You can't you know go start something and then say I'm bored with it. You have to see it through because you don't know where it might take you. . . I want you to be aware, that I'm not going to waste time or money on this if you're not 100% dedicated. I know that's kind of harsh for an 8-year-old or a 6-year-old, but it's the truth. If you are telling me this is something you want to do, not something I'm making you do. So, I want to make sure it's what you want to do and that you'll see it through.

Seara's mother, Shaundra, worked for a reputable company in the business sector.

When I met Shaundra, she had just started a new job and hoped to provide for more enrichment activities for her children:

I gave them a choice for the next school year on three activities, no, two activities they wanted to try. They have to choose a sport and another activity. Now that the music thing, I know she wants to do piano. Because she does art. She has to do a sport. She's an art person. Now she wants to do piano. I'll have the financial means to do something. So, if she wants to do piano, I don't mind putting her in piano.

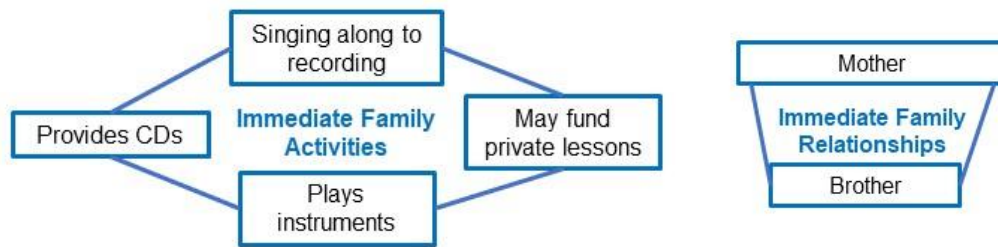


Figure 5.38. Seara: Immediate family network activities and relationships.

***Seara: Extended family music network.***

Shaundra shared that Seara lived with her father (Seara’s grandfather) when she was a young child and Shaundra was going to college classes. He took the children to church where they saw people play music for services. Shaundra’s uncle was a professional jazz and church musician who played the piano, saxophone, and drums. Because Shaundra, not Seara, shared this connection with me, I indicated the weaker links using a dotted line. I did not include Seara’s church community network in the analysis because Seara did not mention attending any church at all. The dotted lines indicate fractures in the relationships and unknown influence on Seara’s lived music experience.



Figure 5.39. Seara: Extended family network activities and relationships.

***Seara: Shelter community network.***

The first time, I met Seara, she was laying down in a quiet space at Kids Club, wearing headphones and holding a CD player. She often chose to listen to books on tape that included music in the background. Seara often wanted to use the karaoke machine to sing a song by herself or with others. Seara and her friends chose to sing songs such as “Royals” (Lourde), “Shake It Off” (Taylor Swift), and “Let It Go” (from the movie *Frozen*). Seara and another friend from Cubs Club played music games (Pitch Painter) on my iPad. Seara often selected the World Scales application on my iPad so she could play the iPad keyboard. Because she tried to play both the keyboard and iPad keyboard, playing the piano could become a molar activity. Seara and I worked together a little on the piano. When I taught Seara how to play “Hot Cross Buns” per her request, she lost interest after five minutes.

Seara often played with dolls in the dollhouse. Oftentimes, her dolls would go to a party and dance. Her dolls liked any kind of dancing except for the robot dance, and especially hip-hop, ballet, and spinning. Her dolls also liked to do the splits which Seara demonstrated by doing the splits herself.



Seara was very excited when teachers from a non-profit dance education organization donated their time to provide dance instruction to the children at Hope Corporate. The dance teachers also distributed tutus to the children who wanted them and which they could keep. Seara chose a red one with sparkles and often showed off her tutu with her painted fingernails and earrings, making sure I knew she painted her nails by herself. Seara said she wanted to take ballet and be a ballerina. She had not previously taken a ballet class, though she often pretended to dance ballet on her own and liked to do her own moves, particularly when no one interfered.

Seara differentiated between performing a song with the karaoke machine performing a song and performing on the piano. She could not decide which one to do for Hopes and Dreams Gala:

Seara: "I can sing by myself, but I can't perform by myself. It makes me nervous.

Maybe I want to do music. I can't make up my mind

Me: What are your choices?

Seara: This or music. Singing.

Me: Aren't they the same thing?

Seara: Nope.

Me: Singing is different from music?

Seara: Yes.

Me: Why is singing different from music?

Seara: Because you sing and the piano sounds different from music.

She was supposed to perform a created dance with two other children, but they

could not implement their dance consistently. Seara and I also worked on a skit that she could share. Eventually, her role was to perform "Let It Go" with two other girls from Kids Club and Cubs Club, however, Seara did not attend the gala.

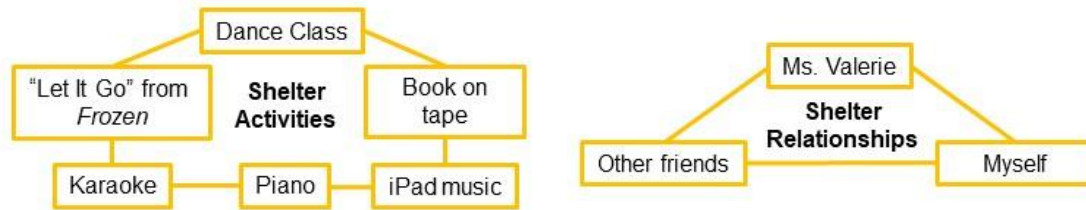


Figure 5.40. Seara: Shelter community network activities and relationships.

**Seara: School community network.**

Seara participated in music class at school but did not have positive things to say about her music teacher. She thought her class was boring, and she wanted to be able to spin to music during class, expressing a desire to move during the class. While she was willing to sing with her classmates during class, she preferred to perform alone for school performances. Seara could sing tunefully and was, according to Shaundra, interested in music. Seara hoped that she could play instruments that interested her, such as the violin and the piano. The dotted lines indicate lack of opportunities for music engagement and weakly linked music experiences in her school music community.

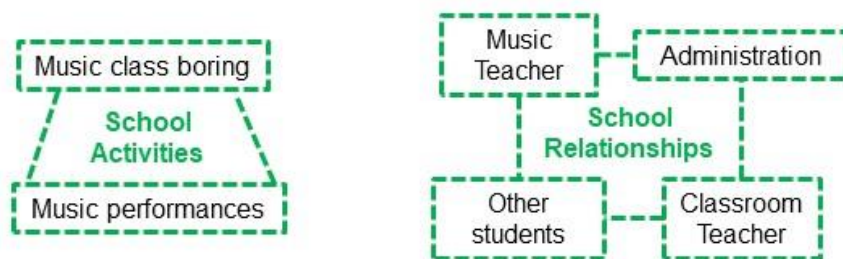


Figure 5.41. Seara: School community network activities and relationships.

### **Seara: Mesosystem networks.**

Seara's story is notable because of her lack of connection across networks and the hope of connections in the future. Seara was the youngest participant in the study which may have contributed to her lack of mesosystem networks. She was also raised by her mother and did not have communication with her extended family.

One mesosystem through was Seara's singing when she listened to music at home, sang with her dolls at the shelter, or performed on the karaoke machine at the shelter. I noticed a disconnect between her obvious singing skills and her lack of interest in her music class at school; her music class should have been a natural context for developing her skills and broaden her knowledge. Her interest in singing helped her form relationships at the shelter, enabling Seara to establish solo links with other children without the assistance of other supportive dyads.

Seara was interested in taking piano lessons and often played the piano at the shelter which fostered a supportive link to help her transition from her previous home to Kids Club. Affordability of private lessons and continued interest will determine the salience of the connection in Seara's networks.

Seara's mother exhibited an affective relationship with Seara, fostered a strong transcontextual dyad across multiple contexts, and provided a supportive link to Seara's interests in art, music, and sports. Shaundra claimed that any activity Seara wanted to try, she was going to be able to afford.<sup>33</sup> Individuals who helped Shaundra become interested

<sup>33</sup> Author's Note: From my own experience as a piano teacher, parents often expected their child to have the executive function to practice on their own or discontinue lessons.

in playing instruments had a second-order effect on Seara. However, this was an incomplete network as Seara may not have known those who inspired her mother to play the piano and the guitar.

If I were to draw lines to depict Seara’s mesosystem networks, I would connect the activities she engaged in at home with those she participated in at the shelter, such as playing the piano and listening to music with others. Particularly, I would connect her interest in playing the piano with exposure to the piano provided by her mother, and possibly by her extended family.

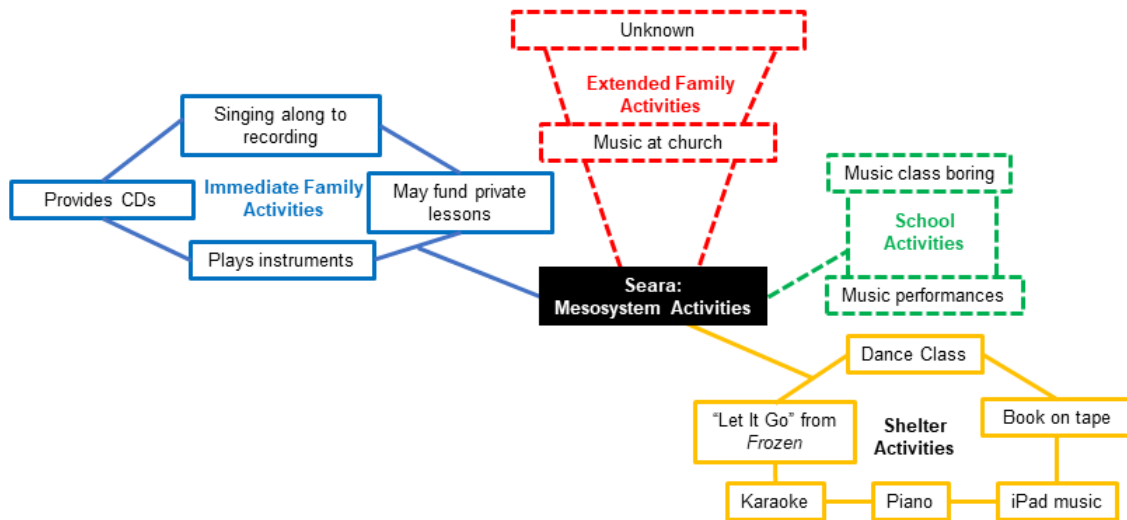


Figure 5.42. Seara: Mesosystem network activities.

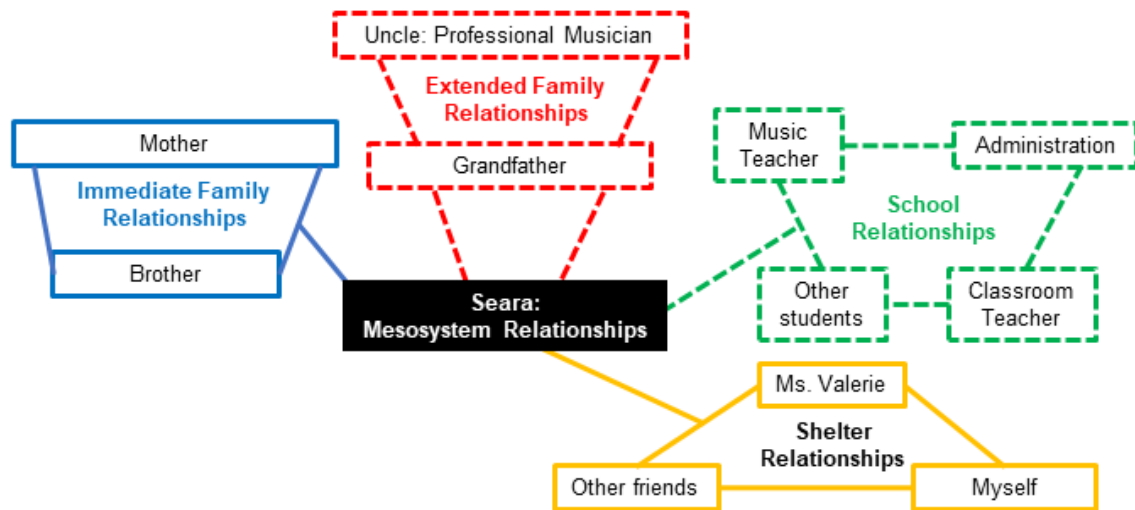


Figure 5.43. Seara: Mesosystem network relationships.

**Seara: Network analysis.**

Seara’s primary network is comprised of her immediate family that includes her mother and five-year old brother. She did not mention engaging in music activities with her five-year old brother, although he is present in the home and sometimes at the shelter when the children in Cubs Den join the children in Kids Den. Seara and her mother, Shaundra, form a strong primary dyad; her mother constantly provides advice and admonishment to Seara and her brother. At first, Seara wants to take ballet, talks about dancing ballet at home, and is excited about wearing a tutu during a dance lesson at Hope Corporate. Shaundra provides interesting knowledge and shows Seara pictures of the feet of ballet dancers. After this, Seara no longer wants to take ballet. Shaundra influences Seara’s macrosystem beliefs and assumptions about the world. Seara’s mother, Shaundra, establishes the guideline that Seara needs to choose one instrument and put forth the

effort needed so that the money spent on lessons is not wasted. Additionally, Shaundra emphasizes that her children must participate in one sport. Shaundra encourages Seara to make a business plan to sell her art. Subsequently, Seara's dream is to make lots of money like her mother.

Currently, Shaundra, Seara, and her brother are estranged from their extended family. While Shaundra speaks with pride about her uncle's accomplishments as a jazz musician, she does not mention any recent communication with her uncle, making the dyad a weakly linked dyad.

While it is not clear which path Seara will take, Seara might bond with her mother through playing the piano. Shaundra speaks with pride about teaching Seara the 1-2-3-4-5 song. If this continues, then her piano playing will become a molar activity and a stronger proximal process the longer that Seara plays the piano. Perhaps if she plays additional instruments in the future, her music experience may be filled with more activities that facilitate proximal process and growth in the field of music.

Seara enjoys listening to audiobook recordings. She eagerly sings her favorite songs, such as "Let It Go" from *Frozen* and a variety of songs produced by Kidz Bop, such as "Chandelier" (Sia). Seara relies on Ms. Valerie, her primary dyad at the shelter, to provide opportunities for music engagement and help in mediation of conflicts with other children. She often plays the keyboard but has to take turns with Maria who often wants to go first. Maria may have a negative second-order effect when her choices preclude Seara from participation in an activity. Due to the procedure of different age groups combining during the extended care on summer days, Seara also engages in music

activities with children from Cubs Club, such as singing with the karaoke machine or making up music while playing with dolls. However, most of her dyadic connections are weakly linked. The younger children have a second-order effect on Seara's engagement through their own music choices and desire to participate with Seara in music activities.

When I visit Kids Club, Seara wants me to be a part of all of her activities. She insists that I go to lunch with them and sit next to her. She wants me to play dolls with her and sing karaoke with her. She also wants my help to prepare either a skit or a song for the Hopes and Dreams Gala (she had tried to create a dance with other children, but it did not work). Seara and I form a joint activity dyad in which we engage in activities together. It is only Seara who questions me about why I have to leave when I have to move away.

Seara does not like her music teacher at her school. Music class is boring. She wants to spin. She does not want to perform with the group. Her relationships with her classroom music teacher and students are weakly linked. Yet, she is interested in singing and playing instruments, such as the violin and the piano. Her interest in music at home fosters the hope that she may develop a dyadic relationship with others at school who engage in music activities. Bronfenbrenner's theory considers the child's perspective on their relationships the primary influence towards their growth as a person. Regarding Seara's musical growth, Seara does not perceive that school music is an activity that is important for her life.

### **Case Seven: Maria**

Maria was a spirited Hispanic female with long dark hair in the fourth grade at the time of this study. I knew Maria from April of 2017 to July of 2017. Her older brother was also part of Kids Club but did not choose to participate in this study. She wanted to study science and learn about bugs and animals. She lived at Hope Corporate with her mother and brother, who was a year older and attended Kids Club with her.

When I first met her, Maria and her brother arrived at Kids Club later than the other children because they stayed at their school of origin, which was further away than the other children's schools. I greeted them while they were eating their snacks. Her brother was willing to chat and answer questions, however, Maria did not say a single word. After a few visits, Maria began to open up and even taught me the motions for "Four White Horses," a folksong game she learned during her school music class. In order to learn this song from Maria, at her request, we met in the library area so she could show me without everyone watching her.

Over time, Maria's spunky, playful personality emerged. She frequently asked me if I brought my iPad or the karaoke machine on the days I visited Hope Corporate. As we built trust, she invited me to play and even to interview. On a water play day, for example, I joined the children on the playground, and Maria shouted she was going to "get me." She filled up a toy and chased me around the playground until she felt close enough to douse me with water. Maria often wanted to take charge of our interview time saying, "When are you going to ask me questions?" or "I want you to ask me questions."



When I asked her what she wanted me to ask, however, she was not sure. After three or four weeks, she was not as interested in asking questions as she had been earlier.

**Maria: Microsystem networks.**

***Maria: Media network.***

When she was with her family, Maria's mother, Estrella, noticed that Maria often listened and danced to girl pop music and music soundtracks from movies. Estrella emphasized they did not listen to music with any "cussing," however, in a personal interview, Maria shared that she liked to listen to Mr. Criminal,<sup>34</sup> who performs songs with cussing, on an older brother's phone when she went to his house. Her mother, Estrella, was a music promoter for local Chicano hip-hop music groups, and Maria confided that she liked to listen to the music produced by her mom's friends. In our first interview, Maria shared that she was trying to make a song about her life, titling her song "My Life." She wanted to write about when she was in the shelter and when she was bullied at school. Estrella confirmed that Maria had engaged in songwriting activities when she lived at a previous shelter: "She tried a couple of months ago when we used to be in the other shelter. She wrote her own lyrics." In these ways, Maria had a network of popular music fed not only by media sources but also by her mother's direct engagement. The dotted lines indicate the unknown aspect of Maria's media relationships.

<sup>34</sup> Mr. Criminal biography. Accessed on June 1, 2017: <https://www.allmusic.com/artist/mr-criminal-mn0000507933/biography>

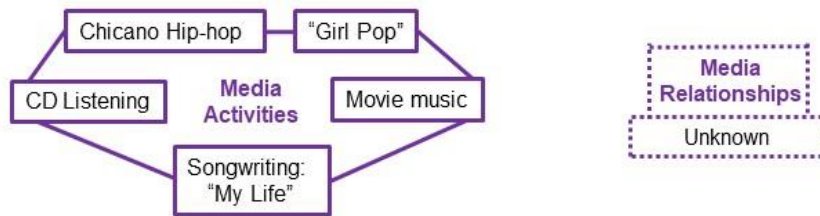


Figure 5.44. Maria: Media network activities and relationships.

***Maria: Immediate family network***

Maria’s immediate family is comprised of her mother, Estrella, her middle-school aged brother, and two older brothers, one of whom was in jail. Maria wanted to be a singer and part of the music business like her mother: “The reason why I want to become a singer is that my mom’s a promoter. Like, she does some music. I want to grow up to be the same thing as her. Music is my favorite thing to listen to.” When Ms. Valerie, the Kids Club lead teacher, asked children about who their heroes were, most of the children mentioned various superheroes. Maria’s hero was her mother. Later, at the Hopes and Dreams Gala, Maria again proclaimed that her hero was her mother. Estrella encouraged Maria to pursue her interests in songwriting:

I do encourage her to keep doing that because I see in the music business that there’s a career. I know for people to get started as [my children’s] age, friends, their kids, they’re eight and their music’s already out there, and these kids, I want my kids to be just like them. So, I encourage my kids to keep doing what they want to do. I tell them if it’s not music, find something you can be passionate about . . . I have connections with my artists where Maria could use their studio

and everything. They could hook her up with their music. All she has to do is write her music and sing. Then they would do everything for her.

Estrella listened to Chicano hip-hop but was particular about what Maria listened to saying, “Just the ones that don’t cuss, just music. This music is not music. I don’t listen to that kind of music. I only listen - because with Chicano hip-hop, it’s mostly speaking and singing about *their* lives instead of all this bad stuff.” Most of the time, the family listened to the radio or CDs.

Maria frequently listened to CD recordings created and produced by Chicano hip-hop artists that her mother knew. On one occasion, Maria met a performer named “Fragile” backstage during a local show. Maria greatly admired Fragile and the moment seemed to be an important memory that was another proximal process that connected Maria with the Chicano hip-hop community: “When she first met us, she started giving us stuff. That's what's cool about her and she's nice and she's pretty.”

Maria also interacted musically with her brothers. One brother, who attended middle school, played instruments in his school band. Maria hope to play instruments in the school band the following year. According to Estrella, another one of Maria’s older brothers, possibly the one who showed her songs by Mr. Criminal, was also an excellent songwriter, but was currently incarcerated and did not have frequent contact with Maria. Estrella explained, “He can sing. He does flows. But that's what I tell him he's just wasting his talent. He's not doing nothing about it. Right now, he's in prison. He just doesn't want to put it out there. He's just wasting his talent. He's a grown-ass man. I can't push him to do it.” Due to his incarceration, Maria’s relationships with her creative

brother was broken, indicated by dotted lines in her immediate family relationship network. Estrella shared about her support for Maria and her other children:

I'm not forcing [Maria] to anything, just whatever she likes. I'm not the type of mom to force somebody to do something at school. If they don't like it or not, I'm not that type of mom. So, if she likes music, then that's what she's going to do. And I'm not going to push her. That's just the point. I'm not pushing them to do anything. If they're passionate about it, they'll do it. If not, I'm not going to be upset. . . That's (singing) what she wants. That's what I tell her. Dreams can come true. What I see here is very sad. Not a lot of mothers push their kids to do what they want. But I support my kids. Whatever they want, I encourage them. That's all you gotta' do for them to keep chasing their dream. Mine took a while. I'm here. I tell them, no matter how old you are, dreams can come true.

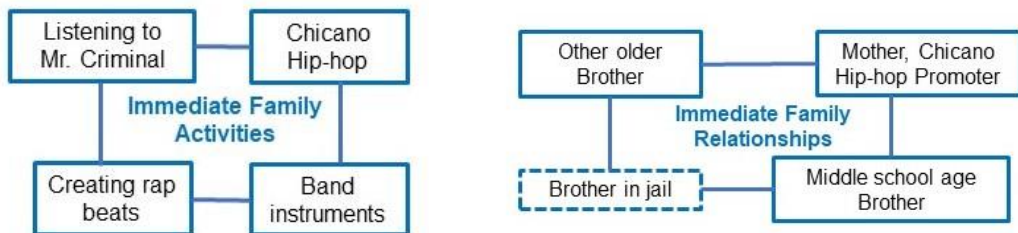


Figure 5.45. Maria: Immediate family network activities and relationships.

***Maria: Extended family network.***

Maria’s grandmother still lived in Mexico at the time of this study, and Maria had not seen her for a very long time. Maria selected her pseudonym because it was her grandmother’s name. Maria also identified songs in Spanish as songs that were “her” songs, self-proclaiming that she was Mexican. When Maria shared about the songs she sang at school, Maria chose the songs in Spanish as her favorite. She expressed that she like Spanish songs because she was Mexican, and it made her think of her grandmother.

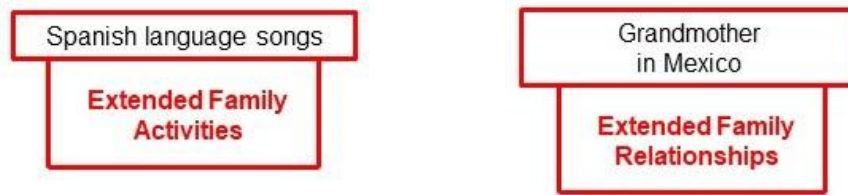


Figure 5.46. Maria: Extended family network activities and relationships.

***Maria: Shelter community network.***

During our first few weeks of encounters, Maria wanted to frequently spend time using the iMaschine app on the iPad to make beats, saying she wanted to create beats and sell them like some of her mom’s friends. Instead of making four or eight-beat loop tracks like other children, she often made 32-beat tracks. While to my ears her creations sounded reasonably complex and sophisticated, Maria often did not want to show them to me and was highly critical of her own creative work.

Using the karaoke machine and playing the keyboard became more accessible because Ms. Valerie rearranged the room so children could access the keyboard more easily against the wall and cleared off the stage to create a space for performances. After this room rearrangement, Maria switched her attention from making beats on the iPad to playing the keyboard and wanted to be a singer on the stage. On the keyboard, Maria created her own songs, but was self-critical and wanted to learn new songs. She asked me to teach her some songs that I knew. I demonstrated a few songs such as “The Knuckle Song” (Barry and the Bookbinders, 1997) and “7 Years” (Sam Smith) and easy-to-play tunes such as “Hot Cross Buns” and “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” and allowed her to select the songs she wanted to play. She often wanted me to play at the same time she did. On

the karaoke machine, Maria chose songs from *Frozen*, “7 Years,” and “Shut Up and Dance” that we sometimes sang together. If there was not a vocal version where a singer performed the song, Maria often became frustrated when she did not know the whole song and switched to another song. she was not attached to any particular song and did not have to sing with a particular person; Maria enjoyed singing both by herself and with others, if the other person knew the words and would not detract from making music.

At the Hopes and Dreams Gala, Maria performed a skit with Ms. Valerie where they acted out Ms. Valerie falling and Maria demonstrating how to be a hero by offering to help to Ms. Valerie during the skit. Later, Maria performed “Let It Go” from *Frozen* with a first-grade child from Cubs Club. Before the show, she was very anxious about the performance and assumed people would laugh at her. However, even though she was quiet, she successfully performed her song with her friend while her mother video recorded everything with her phone. In an earlier interview, Maria did not want to perform with someone else saying, “Sometimes they can like mess up and if they brag about what song they have that one of their group made, then they're gonna’ get mad and they're gonna’ not be wanting to go in their group anymore. So, I would prefer singing alone.”

On one occasion, I walked in the door and Teo and Maria swarmed me wanting me to teach them a song on the piano. Maria proudly showed me her progress on “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” marveling how the melody and the words matched. She also wanted to learn the piano part for “7 Years.” Estrella wished that the shelter provided more music classes. Maria wanted more music opportunities to play the flute, sing, and create her

own music. When asked if she wanted a class where she could make more beats on an iPad or play instruments, Maria wanted music classes at the shelter that could provide an opportunity for songwriting and learning to play instruments:

Me: What about any opportunities in the shelter that you wish they could have?

Estrella: Music class.

Maria: Music class.

Me: What would you want to do in the music class?

Maria: I wanna play the flute and I wanna sing.

Me: Why do you think it would be important to have music class?

Maria: So, kids can sing, and they can make their own music.

Me: Would you want a songwriting class or is that different?

Maria: Songwriting class.

Me: Do you want iPads to make more beats or more instruments like drums and flutes or just singing class?

Maria: More instruments.

The dotted lines indicate the lack of observation of Maria’s preference for engagement with a particular child in activities at the shelter.



Figure 5.47. Maria: Shelter community network activities and relationships.

*Maria: School community network.*

Maria attended elementary school at a location where I previously interviewed the music teacher for another project. She wistfully spoke of an elementary school she had attended when she was younger: “They had nice kids. The teachers were nice. And they had big playgrounds. And then sometimes in the cafeteria, they just took down this big thing, and we would watch movies in there while we were eating lunch. That’s why I want to go back to the two schools that I went to.”

The school she attended at the time of the interview was comprised of kindergarten through eighth grade students, and Maria complained about being bullied by eighth grade students: “One time when I was walking home, it was raining. I was walking to the gate where I get picked up and then I almost got pushed when it was raining. I got pushed by a girl. She said, ‘Move! Watch out!’ and then she pushed me. A couple of boys were laughing at me.” She was also disgruntled because she could not play instruments until fifth grade.

When I first asked Maria about her music, she taught me “Four White Horse,” a folksong with a hand clapping game she learned from her classroom music teacher. Maria performed some of the songs for me that she learned in preparation for a concert. She was a little anxious about sharing them and sang the songs into the couch pillow she was holding and made me look away. The songs varied in language and ethnicity that represented the cultures of French, Spanish, English, and indigenous American cultural groups. The song titles included: “Frere Jacques,” “Four White Horses,” “Uppatayo,” and



Esparó.<sup>35</sup> Her favorite song to perform was the Spanish song because, as Maria explained, “I’m Mexican and I speak some Spanish.” Maria was supposed to perform these songs in a concert at school but could not attend because her family did not have a car. She was happy she could not attend because she was afraid that if somebody made a mistake everyone would laugh at them.

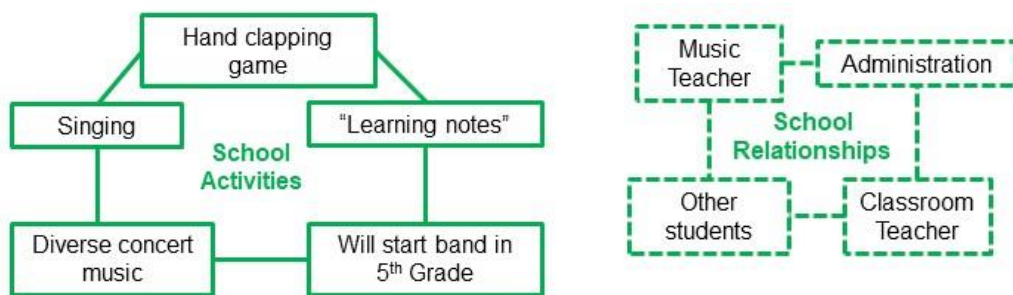


Figure 5.48. Maria: School community network activities and relationships.

**Maria: Mesosystem networks.**

In every context, or new network, Maria encountered, she was always drawn to songwriters or others who could provide an outlet for creative music writing. Connections that fostered music making were prevalent in all of her networks. For example, her school music connected her to her grandmother in Mexico. Her mother’s role in the Chicano Hip-Hop community connected her immediate family to both her personal media and songwriting, as well as the larger music artist community.

<sup>35</sup> Maria referred to songs using the language of the song (a French song, a Mexican song, etc.). She did not provide the titles for the songs. I tried to ascertain an approximate label for the song based on my own knowledge of folk literature. When in doubt, I used the first words of the song.

If I were to draw lines to depict Maria’s mesosystem networks, I would definitely show a strong connection via Chicano hip-hop between her immediate family, media activities, and shelter activities. Additionally, I would connect the relationships between Maria and her middle-school aged brother and the shelter, because they lived connected to both networks. Additionally, I would connect Maria’s interest in songs sung in Spanish at school with the relationship between Maria and her grandmother in Mexico.

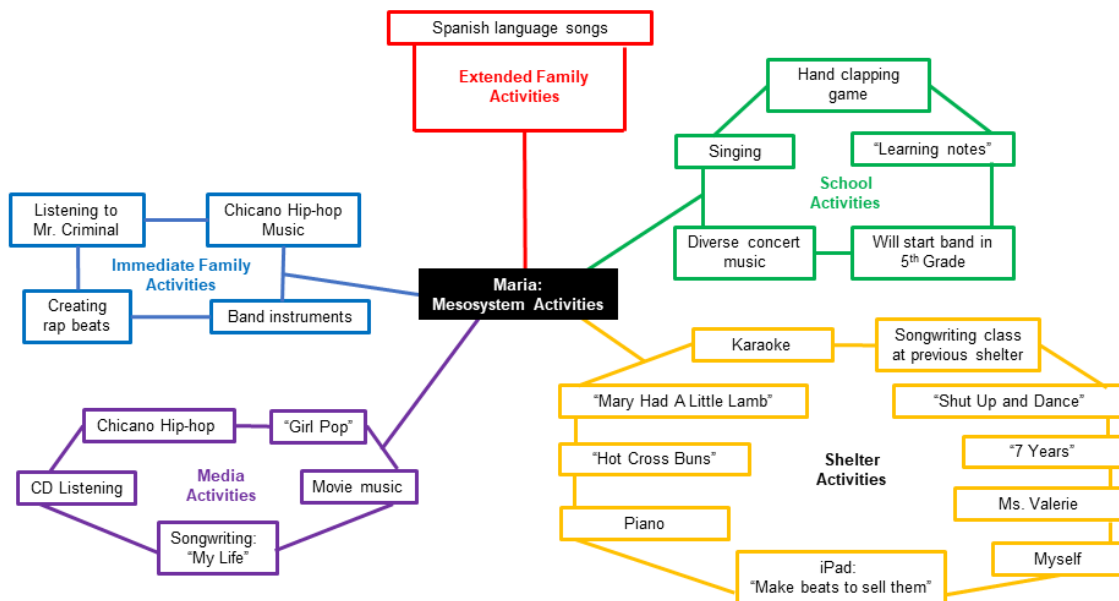


Figure 5.49. Maria: Mesosystem network activities.

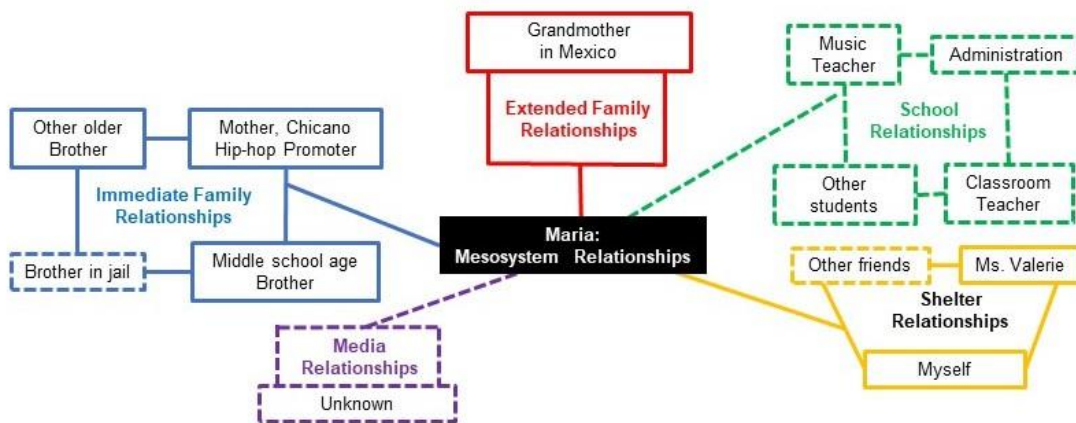


Figure 5.50. Maria: Mesosystem network relationships.

**Maria: Network analysis.**

Maria sees singing as an important part of her life, a molar activity, because she associates performing with being a musician and hopes to work in the music business in the future. Maria creates her own music and writes her own songs. At a previous shelter, Maria took a songwriting class. Currently she explores new melodies on the keyboard and uses iMaschine to make beats with the hope that she can sell them. She is critical of her efforts and often shows frustration, saying that what she creates is “no good.” Maria’s work on the iPad is a molar activity because she projects a long-term goal for her creations.

While she sings and listens to movie tunes and pop songs at home, the music that permeates her life is Chicano hip-hop, a musical style that permeates her relationships in multiple mesosystems. Maria learns about the network of Chicano hip-hop through interactions with multiple people. Maria’s immediate family network is comprised of her mother, Estrella, and three older brothers. Estrella is a promoter for Chicano hip-hop

artists and has many contacts “in the business.” Maria wants to make music and be “just like my mom,” indicating a strong primary dyad between Maria and Estrella, who has a second-order effect on Maria’s music choices. More time is needed to assess the level of meaning and determine whether or not her older brother’s music activities impacted Maria’s music preferences. However, one of her older brothers did provide her with the opportunity to listen to songs using his smart phone. Maria also forms a dyadic bond with Fragile, the Chicano hip-hop artist whom she met in person. She describes meeting the artist in great detail and hopes to meet more of “her mom’s friends” in the future.

Singing songs in Spanish functions as a molar activity due to the connection with her distant grandmother. Of four possible performance songs, Maria prefers the song in the Spanish language at school because the song reminds Maria of her grandmother and her own identity saying, “I like it because I’m Mexican.” Her dyad with her grandmother produces a second-order effect on her music preferences.

Maria wants me to teach her songs on her keyboard. She wants me to ask her questions. She wants to perform songs on the karaoke machine together. Maria and I form a dyad when we share music experiences and teach each other interesting knowledge about our music. She usually avoids the younger children from Cubs Club when they join the group. However, she performs “Let It Go” from *Frozen* with a younger child at the Hopes and Dreams Gala. Ms. Valerie and Maria form a primary dyad and Ms. Valerie has a second-order effect on the opportunities Maria has to make music.

Maria eagerly sings “Four White Horses” and insists on teaching the hand-clapping that goes along with the song. Because she remembered the song and shared it as an example of her music, Maria likely perceived singing this song a molar activity. She remembers learning some of “the notes” or music notation from her music teacher. Maria can sing all of the songs her class prepared for the concert, including the songs in different languages (although she prefers song sung in Spanish). Her ability to sing songs outside of school and her positive perception of her music class indicates a positive link between Maria, her music teacher, and other children in the class. In her particular school, fifth graders choose to join band, orchestra, or stay in the general music class. The infrastructure of her particular school’s curricular options created a second-order effect on her music experience.

#### **Case Eight: Sebastian**

Sebastian was a fifth-grade Hispanic male at the time of this study. I knew Sebastian from May 2017 to July 2017. Sebastian lived at Hope Corporate with his mother, younger sister, and younger brother. Sebastian enjoyed playing basketball outside or in the gym and watching music videos on his phone. One of his hopes and dreams was to become a professional basketball player and buy his family a mansion. Musically, Sebastian wanted to be a singer and write his own songs.

Sebastian expressed himself through his actions more than his words, whether it was playing a game or doing things that were not necessarily the choices Ms. Valerie wanted children to make at the time. He had a younger sister and brother in Kids Club who talked even less than Sebastian. I asked his sister to join the study early on, but she

refused and did not often engage in music activities. His younger brother barely spoke a word to anyone, though he enjoyed making crafts and engaging in hands on activities. Later, when I interviewed their mother, Angela, the interview only lasted ten minutes. Ms. Valerie was surprised I could get her to talk at all.

**Sebastian: Microsystem network.**

*Sebastian: Media network.*

Sebastian learned songs from a friend who introduced him to YouTube videos: “I Spy” (KYLE feat. Lil Yachty),<sup>36</sup> “Rolex” (Ayo & Teo),<sup>37</sup> and “Rolex in Reverse” (Ayo & Teo),<sup>38</sup> which featured the dance moves for “Rolex” backwards. He preferred to sing by himself because when he tried to sing karaoke, he thought that other singers “messed up on the lyrics.” However, he was willing to sing with Teo, another child of about the same age who arrived at Hope Corporate about the same time, for the Hopes and Dreams gala. Sebastian shared that he liked music, “Because it’s interesting to listen to, like how the beat goes, and the song. And what I like about some songs is that they have a good message,” although he was not able to think of songs that he deemed a “good message” when we spoke.

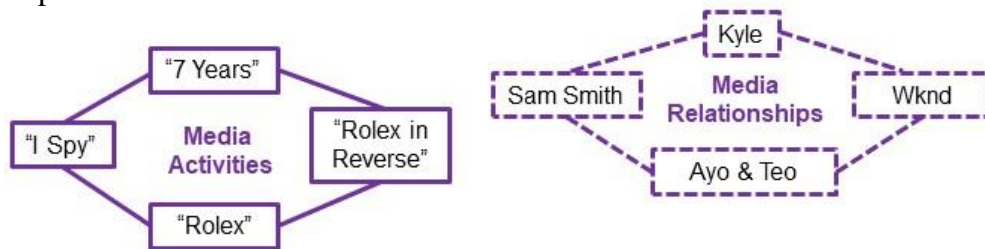


Figure 5.51. Sebastian: Media network activities and relationships.

<sup>36</sup> “I Spy” YouTube video. Accessed August 1, 2017: <https://youtu.be/5XK4v2fgMPU>

<sup>37</sup> “Rolex” YouTube video. Accessed August 1, 2017: <https://youtu.be/lwk5OUII9Vc>

<sup>38</sup> “Rolex in Reverse” YouTube video. Accessed August 1, 2017: <https://youtu.be/pcu7VU5eCSM>

***Sebastian: Immediate family network.***

Sebastian’s mother, Angela, said that she listened to oldies such as “I’m Your Puppet” (James and Bobby Purify). Angela also mentioned other “oldies” songs that the family sang, including “Hotel California” (Eagles) and “Let It Be” (Beatles). Angela was supportive of whatever her son wanted to do in music. She smiled broadly and recorded his performance at the Hope Corporate gala with her smart phone.

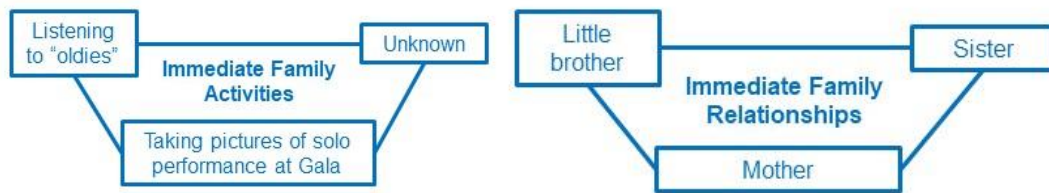


Figure 5.52. Sebastian: Immediate family network activities and relationships.

***Sebastian: Shelter community network.***

Sebastian occasionally engaged in music activities with Maria or other Kids Club children on the karaoke machine, especially with Teo. He generally sang in tune but struggled to match the rhythm of the song track he was using to support his singing. Both Teo and Sebastian frequently wanted to sing “7 Years” (Lukas Graham), which they decided to sing together at the Hopes and Dreams Gala. However, Teo did not show up and Sebastian sang along to the recording by himself. Sebastian performed the entire song from memory.

Sebastian and Teo often sang songs together. When I conducted my first interview with Sebastian, he was anxious to get to the computer and do activities with his

friend Teo. When I asked Sebastian if he could wait until our interview was over, I overheard Teo whispering to just not talk a lot and get it done quick so they could sing karaoke together. One day the Sebastian and Teo began a song by Jeffy at lunch; the two boys along with a few other males at their table and were more interested in chanting their rhyme than getting food. Sebastian and Teo also used the iMaschine application on my iPad to create their own beats.

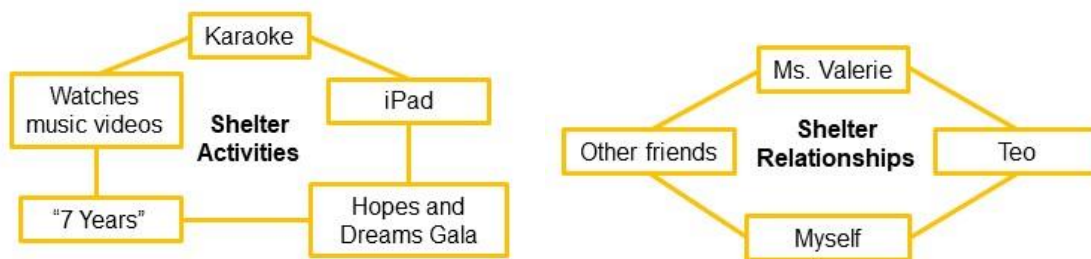


Figure 5.53. Sebastian: Shelter community network activities and relationships.

***Sebastian: School community network.***

Although Sebastian said that he wanted to play the piano “Because I like how you can make a lot of tones on it,” during all of my observations at Hope Corporate, I never saw him at the piano. It may be that he associated instruments with school, where Sebastian said he wanted to learn to play the piano, guitar, and drums so that he could be a singer and people would come to listen to him. He wanted the skills to write his own songs. He did not talk about his school’s musical experiences, however, so these remain unknown. The dotted lines indicate a lack of opportunities for music and unknown music relationships with others in Sebastian’s school community network.



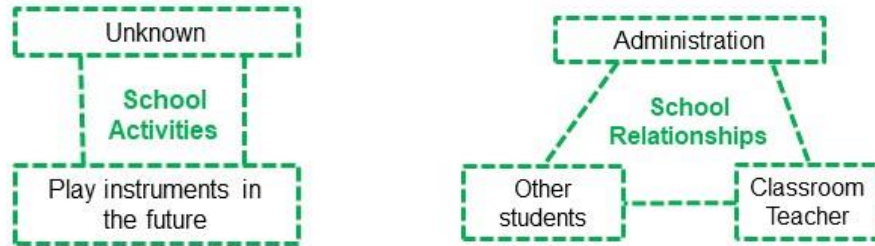


Figure 5.54. Sebastian: School community network activities and relationships.

**Sebastian: Mesosystem network.**

Sebastian experienced few connections across networks in his life. His mother, Angela, photographed him at the Hopes and Dreams gala, providing a brief supportive link. Angela might be able to take videos of his success, but he will need someone to provide him interesting knowledge about playing music instruments and the rest of the music world for hm to sustain engagement.

If I were to depict Sebastian’s mesosystem using lines, I would connect his media activities with his music making in the shelter community. I might also connect his mother to his shelter activities because she demonstrated her support for his performance at the Hopes and Dreams Gala event.

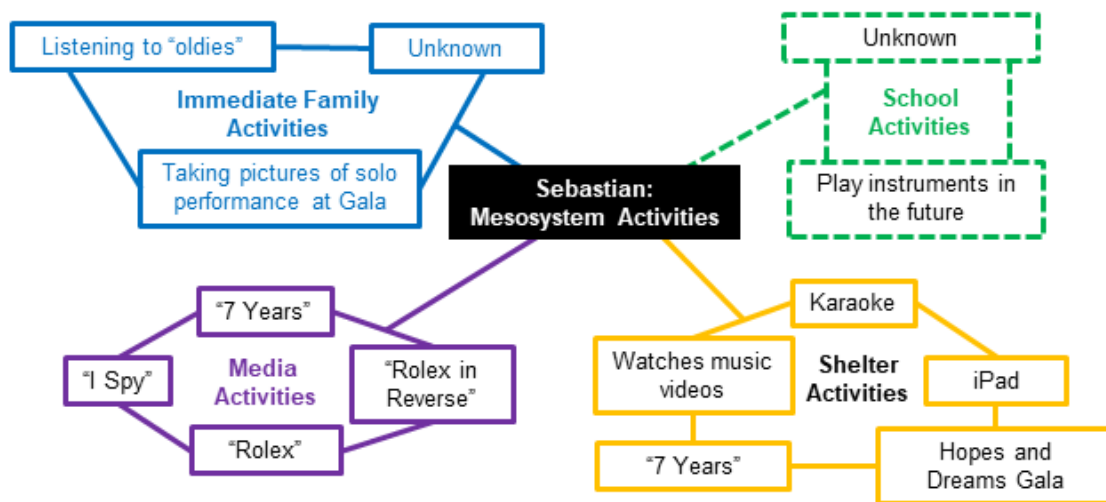


Figure 5.55. Sebastian: Mesosystem network activities.

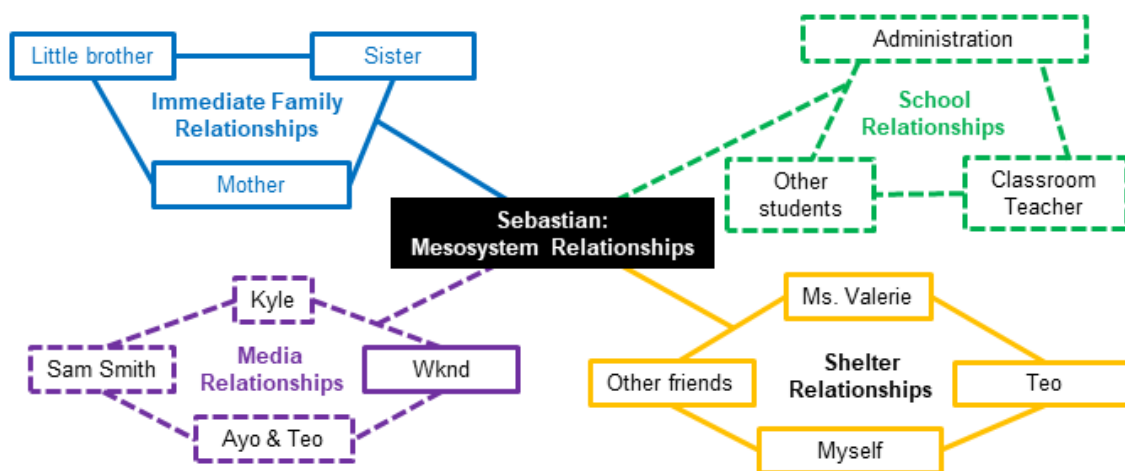


Figure 5.56. Sebastian: Mesosystem network relationships.

### Sebastian: Network analysis.

Sebastian likes to listen or watch music videos on YouTube. He prefers songs with a positive message but cannot recall the names of any of those songs. He likes songs such as “Rolex” and “I Spy” which he watches with friends at the shelter. He joins with other boys in chanting the latest Jeffy rhyme. Sebastian and Teo constantly practice “7

Years” to perform for the Hopes and Dreams Gala. Sharing music experiences is one of the ways that he forms joint activity dyads with others. The YouTube channel and popular music artists, producers, and other stakeholders create an exosystem that creates a second-order effect on the content and access Sebastian has to music listening opportunities.

When Sebastian dreamed of his future as a musician, the act of dreaming functioned as a molar activity because he felt it was important enough to share with me, even though he was usually not verbally prolific. Sebastian’s primary direct network includes his mother, Angela, and his younger brother and sister. Angela often listens to “oldies,” a music style that does not currently interest Sebastian. However, at some point in adulthood, he may associate the “oldies” with his family members and begin to listen to their music. At home and at the shelter, Sebastian likes to dance to “Ju On That Beat.” Angela, his main primary dyad, supports whatever her son wants to do. She smiles broadly and records his performance with her smart phone, indicating that she is a potential supportive link for his future music endeavors.

Sebastian cannot remember any previous experiences with classroom music. He hopes that he can find a school community that can help him learn instruments so he can sing and write his own songs. At the time our interview, Sebastian did not know of any options available to him for being a musician. Sebastian believes that the music his mother and other relatives listens to is “oldies” music and not a part of what he should listening to currently. Even though Sebastian wants to play instruments and could sing in tune, Sebastian assumes that he cannot participate in school music activities. He enjoys

playing basketball and bowling during his P.E. class. Yet, his music dreams of singing and playing instruments indicate that he is not only an athlete; he also has the ability and desire to make music.

### **Case Nine: Teo**

Teo was a multi-racial male (his mother was African-American, his father was Hispanic and Native American) in third grade at the time of this study. He was one of five children in his family and was in the middle somewhere. Some of the children lived at Hope Corporate and his mother was pregnant with another child. His mother and father were separated; his father lived elsewhere. I knew Teo from April 2017 to July 2017. The first time we met, he was showing off his dance moves at the Mother's Day event at the shelter. He said he liked his gym class the best at school because he could do races. Teo often shouted with glee when I arrived at Hope Corporate saying, "It's the Karaoke Lady!" Teo thought long and hard about his pseudonym but chose it after one of the music artists, Teo, who performed songs he accessed on YouTube, such as "Rolex" (Ayo & Teo).

Teo attended Kids Club sporadically throughout the summer, so opportunities to generate observation data were limited. I hoped to see him perform and to connect with Teo's mother at the Hopes and Dreams gala event sponsored by the shelter, but neither Teo nor his mother attended. When Teo did come to Kids Club, he often chose activities that he could do with Sebastian, such as blocks or video games, and when the staff interviewed children for the Hopes and Dreams Gala video, they interviewed Teo and Sebastian together. During the staff interview, Teo said he wanted to be a professional

basketball player when he grew up. He wanted his family to live in a mansion, saying that when he became a professional basketball player, he was going to build Hope Corporate a mansion too. He wanted to live the good life saying, “Like staying good in basketball and don’t get hurt in basketball. Taking care of our family.” He felt that his family had changed for the better since coming to Hope Corporate. Teo also envisioned himself being a veterinarian or a football player. His interest in becoming a veterinarian stemmed from his encounter with a turtle and experiences with his cousin.

**Teo: Microsystem networks.**

***Teo: Media network.***

Teo reported that he watched a YouTube video “Rolex” (Ayo & Teo) when he felt happy. Teo wanted to listen to music at home but could not access YouTube on his mother’s phone. His older sister also would not let him access YouTube on her phone. If he could access a smartphone, he wanted to listen to the song on the video recording of the game *Road Blocks*.

Teo learned his dance moves from YouTube and surmised that nobody taught him the moves. Someone else made them up, he said, but he learned from watching the videos. When asked for advice on how to learn his dance moves, Teo suggested:

Look up Rolex, and then it will show you. The one that shows. Not the one that has two hands and one of them has a watch on it. The one that shows two guys, one with a panda mask and one with a weird looking mask. And look up “Juju On That Beat.” It’s the one with the guy with the white shirt on. And that’s it. Those are the two videos I watch. I don’t watch videos no more because I already know

the dance. And another song called “Reverse,” and it’s by Ayo and Teo too. And that’s all.

The dotted lines indicate the unknown influence and weakly linked connection of Teo’s media relationships.



Figure 5.57. Teo: Media network activities and relationships.

**Teo: Immediate family network.**

Teo liked music because, he said, he could play instruments: a tuba, violin, flute, harmonica, and the piano. When he felt happy, in addition to watching the video “Rolex” (Ayo & Teo), Teo said he played the violin, flute, tuba, piano, and harmonica. When he felt sad, he played a sad song on the violin, harmonica, tuba, or what he called an “Indian flute.” He shared that his father, who was absent from the family at the time of this study, was “Mexican, Black, and Indian” so that’s why he played the “Indian flute.” In his own words, Teo played, “A very, very, very, very, very sad noise. It makes you cry. It made me cry. And that’s it.” All of the instruments he described “playing” seemed related to his family or his extended family, described next.

Teo’s mother used her phone and a Bluetooth speaker to play what she described as “old-school” music. At the Hope Corporate Mother’s Day event, she raved about how

her son loved music. When Teo showed off his moves on the dance floor, she shared how she did break dancing when she was younger, so she was not surprised her son liked to dance. Teo had multiple brothers and sisters, including an older brother who lived in Oklahoma, and these siblings likely joined Teo in playing or listening to music.

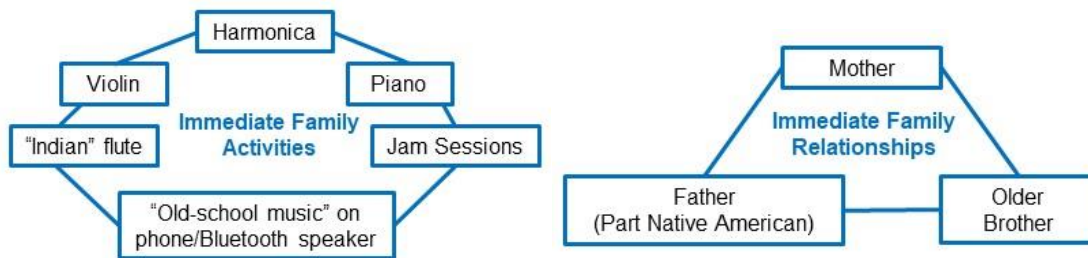


Figure 5.58. Teo: Immediate family network activities and relationships.

**Extended family network: Teo.**

Teo made music with his aunt who lived “around the corner” at the home they had prior to coming to Hope Corporate. He reported that they often sang and played instruments together. A female cousin played the flute or violin, and they all danced together. Teo also played music at school with a male cousin who lived across the street from Hope Corporate at the time of this study.

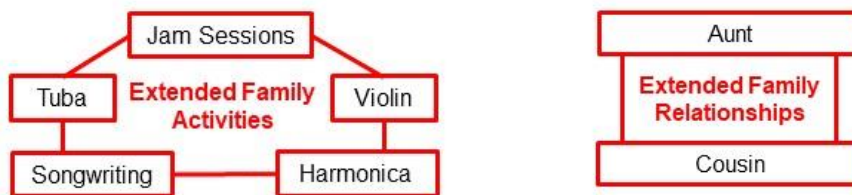


Figure 5.59. Teo: Extended family network activities and relationships.

*Teo: Shelter community network.*

When I walked in the Kids Club door one day, Teo and Maria swarmed me, wanting me to teach them a song on the piano. Teo requested that I teach him “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star” and the easy version of “Mary Had A Little Lamb.” When he tried to play the “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star,” he played only one pitch of each repeated melody note instead of playing two times. When I reminded him that playing it was just like the song and he could sing the song in his head, he was much more successful. Later in the day, I also taught him the piano introduction for “7 Years.” To play this tune, Teo used his own fingering and split the part into two hands, with his fingers falling over each other.

Teo occasionally wanted to play on my iPad along with Sebastian, mostly using iMaschine and Pitch Painter. Usually, they elected to use the earphone splitter so each could use his own headphone. Teo also create a beat on iMaschine. It is comprised of snare drum and kick drum and some cowbell.<sup>39</sup> It is comprised of snare drum and kick drum, with some cowbell. Teo occasionally sang karaoke with Sebastian. In preparation for the Hopes and Dreams gala, Sebastian and Teo sang with the karaoke machine to practice their song “7 Years” (Lukas Graham), which both children memorized. Sebastian performed the song alone because Teo and his mother did not attend the Hopes and Dreams gala. On one occasion, both Alex and Teo chanted a rhyme by Jeffy while they waited for their lunch.

<sup>39</sup> All SoundCloud recordings for Hope Corporate: <https://soundcloud.com/corrie-box/sets/hopecorporatestudy/s-KUPmW>



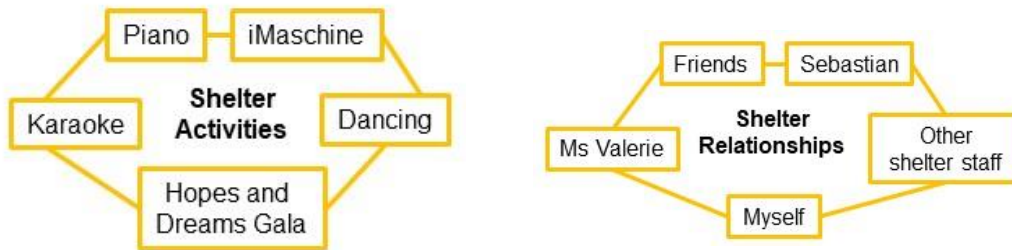


Figure 5.60. Teo: Shelter community network.

***Teo: School community network.***

Teo enjoyed his music class at school he attended before arriving at Hope Corporate that he still attended while living at the shelter. He enjoyed performing songs with his classmates, such as “A Lovely Summer,” “My Dog Loves Me,” and “So Cool,” which was especially fun for Teo because he got to wear sunglasses and keep them. He also enjoyed playing other instruments in music class, especially the flutaphone, which he described as “very long, very big, and you need to put your mouth on it, and it will make a loud noise.” His flutaphone was currently in storage. Teo said that played almost all the instruments in his music class and sang songs on a video that his teacher recorded.

At his current school, Teo only had one friend, his cousin, who lived across the street (possibly in another apartment area connected to Hope Corporate). Teo said that he brought his flute and violin to school and played them while his friend sang. They could only take out their instruments in the morning or at recess. They created their own songs about their hopes and dreams and “how we grew up.” Teo could not sing any of them for me because, he said, his cousin sang for the group. Teo made notes about what to play:

I have a notebook and I write it down. When I play the violin, I put “V” and when I play the - the flute I put “F.” First I put “V” and then I put “F” two times and then “V” two times and then “F” one time and then the rest. And then one is “V,” like, for a long time and then “F” two times and then “F” three times - no “F” five times and then “V” one time and then “F” another time. And that’s it.

The dotted lines indicate the unknown quality of the relationship link between Teo and his classroom teacher.

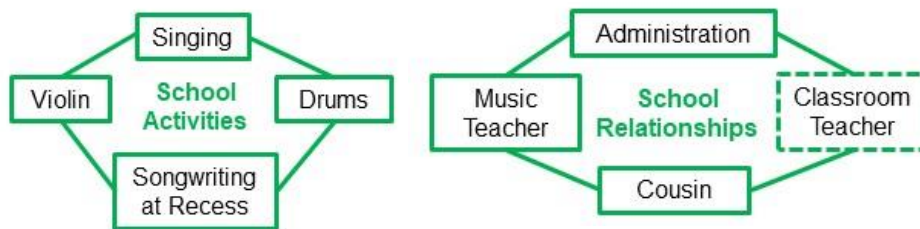


Figure 5.61. Teo: School community network activities and relationships

**Teo: Mesosystem network.**

For Teo, making music, particularly music with instruments, is a proximal process that connects him to and forms connections with others. In every micro network he described, Teo mentioned playing instruments. Family members, either in his immediate or extended networks, functioned as a transcontextual dyads across Teo’s personal, family, school, and shelter networks, creating a mesosystem of relationships and musical engagement.

If I were to draw lines to depict Teo’s mesosystem networks, I would connect the music making, dancing, and singing he engaged in with his immediate family, to his extended family, school, and shelter activities. Specifically, I might connect his interest in

playing what he called the “Indian flute” with his father. Additionally, the music activities Teo engaged in during his personal media activities were similar to those he participated in at Hope Corporate. On at least one occasion, activities at Hope Corporate influenced his personal listening choices at home.

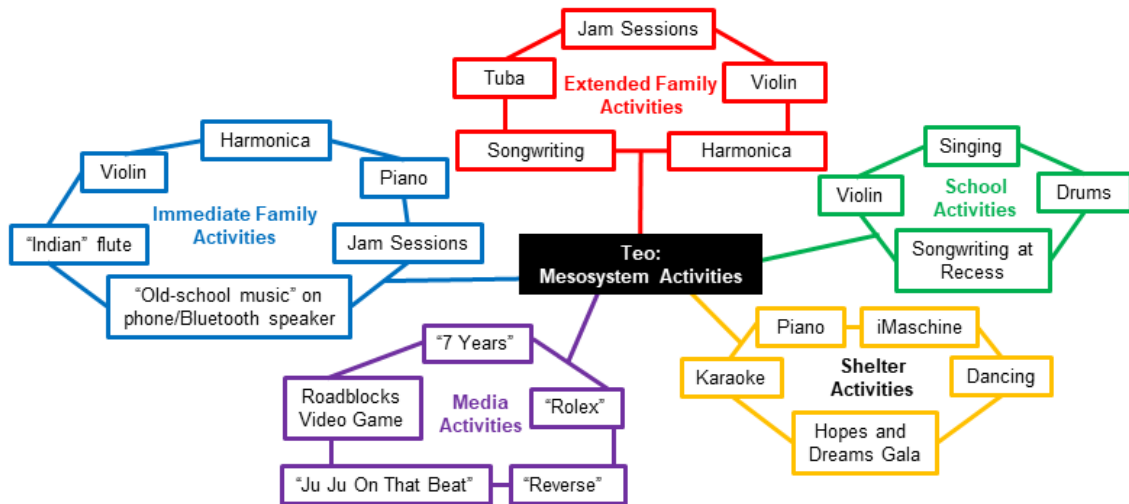


Figure 5.62. Teo: Mesosystem network activities.

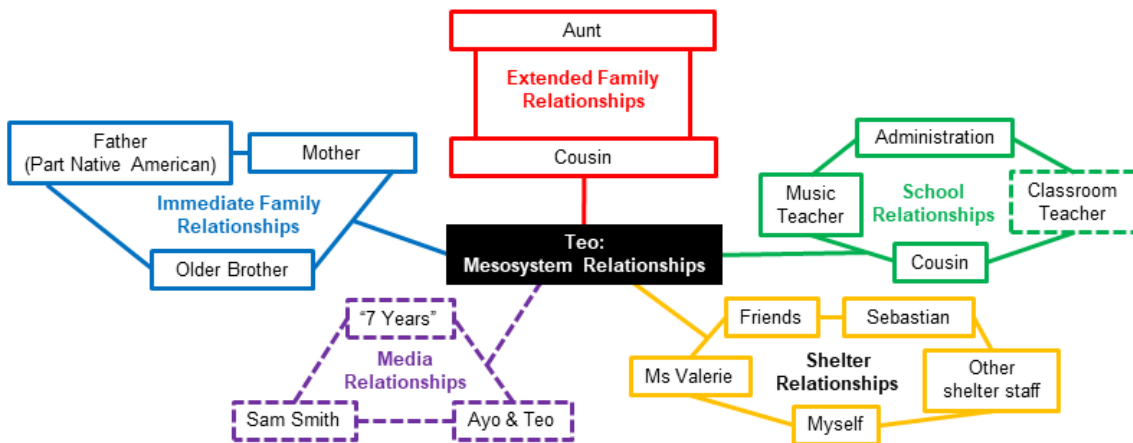


Figure 5.63. Teo: Mesosystem network relationships.

**Teo: Network analysis.**

Teo likes to dance. Even though his mother did break dancing when she was young, Teo learns all of his dance moves by watching videos on the internet. His favorite YouTube channel is produced by artists Alex and Teo, the inspiration for his pseudonym. His support for Alex and Teo, along with all of the other viewers for their channel, validates their work and incentivizes the production of more videos, creating a virtual dyadic relationship.

Teo's closed social network with his immediate family includes his mother and brothers and sisters. His mother supports his love for music and enables his pursuit of music making, which has a second-order effect on his music endeavors. Teo plays the "Indian flute," which he associates with his father's ethnic background, but his father is absent from the home. Teo's success playing the "Indian flute" at home likely fosters success playing the flutaphone at school. His success on instruments foster the dyadic connection between his family's past and his present school experience. However, the flute is now in storage due to homelessness, so the connection is momentarily broken. When Teo visits his older brother in Oklahoma, Teo says he plays instruments of all kinds while his brother sings happy songs. Jam sessions with his brother are meaningful molar activities that form connections through repeated proximal processes.

Sometimes, Teo says, he takes one of his instruments to his aunt's house and she sings while they play the instruments together, such as the violin, tuba, and flute. With every jam session, his aunt affectively nourishes Teo's bond with her and with the instruments through the proximal process of music making. His aunt likely takes her

previous experiences making music and shares them with Teo (exosystem influence).

When his cousin “who is a girl” plays the flute or violin, he dances to the music. Teo also plays music with his cousin, who is a boy, both at home and at school, where they write songs during recess; his cousin sings while Teo plays the violin and writes down the pitches for the song or the order of instruments in a notebook. The cousins’ music making strengthens their dyadic bonds with each other across the immediate family, extended family, and school network (mesosystem).

At the shelter, Teo and Sebastian sing karaoke, chant Jeffy rhymes, and make “beats” on the iPad together. They bond with each other through engagement in meaningful activities such as sports, video games, and making music, which connects them through multiple iterations of proximal processes of they share together. Teo and Sebastian both prepare to sing “7 Years” for the Hopes and Dreams Gala and Teo prepares dance moves, but he is not able to attend the event. Each child suggests activities or chooses to participate together, which indicates an affective relationship with the other. Teo’s past encounters with music, along with the newest Jeffy rhyme, are shared, creating a second-order effect on Sebastian. Ms. Valerie, the Kids Club teacher, provides multiple opportunities for Teo to make music alone on the keyboard or with others in preparation for the Hopes and Dreams Gala, creating a supportive link between the music Teo previously did at home and music opportunities at the shelter. I teach him to play “7 Years” and “Mary Had A Little Lamb” on the keyboard, after which Teo proudly announces that he now plays the piano. Because I taught him songs, I have an

affective relationship with Teo; he looks to me to provide new interesting knowledge to add to his repertoire of songs.

Teo forms a positive relationship with his classroom music teacher and reported pride when his teacher video recorded his class, creating a strong primary dyad between Teo and his music teacher that vacillates between an observational and joint activity dyad depending on the activities they do together. Teo's music teacher determines the repertoire and activities in class, which has a second-order effect on Teo's classroom experience. If he changes schools, Teo could experience a disruption to this particular mesosystem network that fosters music making.

**Exosystem influences.**

Performers and producers of music media for children in these case descriptions have a second-order effect on their listening options and are part of the exosystem that influences the children's music choices. Contributors to YouTube video postings and other media sources form a virtual exosystem that influences the type of music activities in which they engage. From the video game designer to make-up artists, set design, producers, writers, and artists, an entire community interacts with each other but not directly with the child.

Even if they were not physically present because they were part of her immediate family, the exosystem of the Chicano hip-hop community influences Maria's perception of music making and provides a model for engagement in the music business as a career.

The most obvious, but still critical, exosystem for the children in this study included their local school district's administration, and school personnel, including

school counselors and their music teacher. Local supporters of music education, and music education resource providers made available the opportunities children had to participate in school music classes and instrumental experiences.

Due to the limitations of this study, the children only reported the effects from the exosystem on the meaning of making music in their lives. Some children (Wild Fire, Maria, and Teo) perceived that their music class was a positive experience that they wanted to continue. Other children (John Cena, Denise, and Seara) did not like their music class. Fire Star and Sebastian did not attend any music class at their school. Yet, all of the children were interested in making music with me and on their own at the shelter.

Administrative choices and a lack of resources could affect future music explorations regardless of these children and their enthusiasm or lack of enthusiasm for music making. For example, the school exosystem of administration and music teachers at Wild Fire's previous school provided Wild Fire with opportunities to make music through participation in a rock band and strings ensemble. Wild Fire moved to Hope Corporate right before her concert and could no longer perform the music she rehearsed. She no longer had access to opportunities to play instruments at school.

Multiple exosystems could have potentially support Sebastian in his music endeavors. He could have had more opportunities to learn music instruments through his school with better support of school and district administration. Non-profit music organizations in the area could have provide Sebastian with music lessons. Potentially, early childhood music classes in the past could have helped his mother interact with him and better verbalize her thoughts and feelings. Sebastian's story is another example of a

child with musical potential who proverbially “slipped through the cracks.” Hopefully, in the future, Sebastian will find dyadic connections, either at school or elsewhere, that can help him pursue his dreams.

Through passage of the *McKinney-Vento Act*, the federal government organized an exosystem designed to support the development of individuals experiencing homelessness, especially students. For at least one of the participants, that exosystem needed reevaluation of its effectiveness in fulfilling the federal mandate.

From my research of the *McKinney-Vento Act*, the inability of Kat to attend her after-school string rehearsal infringed on her right to all of the opportunities afforded children who are housed and inhibited her development as a musician. While I am making assumptions about her expected progress, I cannot help but to assume that an extra full hour once a week, an opportunity only afforded children who lived closer to the school or could afford transportation, would have greatly benefited Kat’s musical progress.

### **Macrosystem influences.**

Children held diverse beliefs both about their own abilities and what they should expect from making music or participation in a music class. John Cena believed that music was an activity that you did, such as singing, playing instruments, and performing. Making music was a way to make friends or build relationships, such as those between his sister, mother, and friends at the shelter. He embodied the role of an MC or “hype man” (Interview, January 30, 2017). His media relationships were identity forming. He preferred making music, rather than watching someone else make music (e.g. at church, current music class). John Cena held definite ideas about music experiences that were



“boring.” However, even though some music experiences were boring, John Cena still wanted to make music and used music to build relationships with other people in his life.

Denise’s mother, Verona, assumed that the school will take care of her children’s music education. Without the capability to provide private lessons, Verona relies on the school music teacher to teach them everything they needed to know about music to access future opportunities.

Wild Fire believed that she was a singer and that creating music with others could help her make friends more easily. Music making functions as the supportive link to form relationships dyads and connections that create mesosystem networks between her immediate family, shelter, and school communities.

Kat believed that music helps her brain grow and has a positive attitude towards learning in general. She even dreamed of becoming a teacher in the future. She also believed that everyone in her family needed to play an instrument. She was fiercely confident in her own abilities, though she struggled to play a different instrument than her own violin at the instrument petting zoo.

Seara held unique beliefs and assumptions theories about how she should engage in music activities. She assumes that she should be able to dance during her music class. Seara also believes that one piano lesson will last all day. At the shelter, she prefers to perform with others because she was scared of the audience. Yet, at school, Seara only wanted to perform by herself. Further interviews may have revealed the rationale for her choices.

Maria believed that if she produces interesting beats on the iPad, she can sell them and make money. One challenge to her belief is her own self-doubt and severe self-critique on her work. She also believed her mother's advice that if she works hard to pursue her dreams, like her mother, her dreams will become a reality.

Teo believes that he can play all kinds of instruments, even if he can only play "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star" on each instrument. Music making is a part of his life and something that provides him with an opportunity to express his idea and connect with his family members. He was confident about his abilities and had no fear about the risk involved in creating music and was not concerned about what others thought. Teo's macrosystem was built on beliefs that families and friends make music together to express emotions and connect with each other.

### **Summary of Findings**

Analysis to find emergent themes or similarities between cases provided largely inconclusive due to the heterogeneity of participant networks, a common characteristic supported by relevant literature. Additionally, participant transience also affected data collection; the children in this study resided at the shelter from one to six months, with an average stay of three months. However, a few commonalities outlined below suggested areas for further study.

All children in this study sang either on their own or used the karaoke machine. None of the children participated in a choral ensemble. Children either previously played instruments, currently played instruments, or hoped to play instruments in the future. Seven children played or hoped to play the keyboard. Four children played or hoped to

play the drums. Five children played or hoped to play string instruments. Six children consistently incorporated movement into their music making.

Songs preferred by more than two children included: “7 Years” by Lukas Graham, “Ju On That Beat,” “Watch Me Whip/Nae,” “Let It Go” from *Frozen*, “Shut Up and Dance,” “Jingle Bells,” and “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer.” External influences and the chronological duration of this study likely affected music preferences; further observation and field work could have produced more conclusive findings.

Children engaged in a variety of connections including personal, immediate family, extended family, church, hip-hop community, school community, and shelter community networks. Two children were not involved in any formal music class. Three children shared negative perspectives on their formal music class. Only four children had positive connections with their current music teacher.

All of the parents I spoke with hoped their children could engage in music in the future. All children also desired to participate in a music ensemble, class, or informal music making group in the future. Past or current connections provided insight into the potential access to music making afforded children in this study. For three children, their music teacher was creative, fun, and provided opportunities for active music making that formed stronger connections between the child and the teacher. Family relationships provided support for children to continue to make music amidst housing instability.

## Chapter 6

### DISCUSSION

#### **Summary of the Problem of Homelessness**

Music plays an integral role in the physical, emotional, and social development of children (Hargreaves, Miell, & MacDonald, 2002). Music is part of children's lives that fosters meaningful connections with others and provides space for self-expression (Campbell, 2010). When an episode of homelessness occurs, a child experiences fractures and disruptions in human relationships and experiences that are crucial to their development, including their music connections.

I became aware of the problem of homelessness through my life experiences working with children experiencing homelessness. In 2015, I volunteered at Hope Corporate, a shelter in Phoenix that served people experiencing homelessness, including children and families. During my volunteer activities, I became aware of the children and their musical lives, and I became interested in what was happening to the children, knowing that they also attended schools. Most of my teacher colleagues seemed unaware about children, homelessness, and mandates of federal legislation meant to support their education, such as the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*. I returned to Hope Corporate for field work in 2016 to investigate the children's perspectives of music in their lives and the way social relationships supported their music making.

## **Summary of Research Design**

This study explored the connections between music, children, and their lived experience that included an episode of homelessness. My aim was to provide researchers, educators, therapists, shelter staff, and community members who interact with children experiencing homelessness information that might help them recognize the value of children's musical experience and, as a result, include and utilize music to mitigate the effects of homelessness and build bridges to new opportunities.

This multiple-case study with nine participants was conducted in the after-school care program of a shelter for homeless families in the southwestern United States that I refer to as "Hope Corporate" in this document. Over the course of a year, I served as a volunteer at the shelter and provided optional music activities for free time that earned me the title of "The Karaoke Lady." Data were generated through interviews of nine children, third-party interviews with parents, collecting artifacts, and field observations conducted as a participant-observer. As a participant-observer, I provided some kinds of music activities for the children. I brought a karaoke machine or an iPad for children to use during free time. The shelter had computers, keyboards, and percussion instruments that children used. They also had a stage area for performances and spaces for children to dress up. I was guided by the interests and requests of the children, and while I provided help or models when they requested, I did not aim to teach in any specific way.

In this study, I aimed to investigate not only the musical lives of these children, but also how their musical lives were reflective of the relationships in their lives—relationships that may be crucial not only to support the children during the traumatic

episode of homelessness but also to foster continued musical engagement. The children in this study, who ranged between the ages of eight and twelve, attended the shelter's Kids Club program, which provided care after-school care during the school year and all day care during the summer. The participants included boys and girls from diverse ethnic backgrounds who lived at the shelter in either emergency housing (hotel-style rooms) or transitional housing (small apartments). They lived in the shelter with different kinds of family groupings for different amounts of time. Interacting with the children became an important part of this study to build trust and get to know them. Due to their transient housing status, my contact with the children ranged from a few weeks to multiple months. This study investigated the following questions concerning the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness.

1. What are the past, present, and imagined future musical lives of children experiencing homelessness?
2. How are their musical lives reflective of the structures of relationships in their lives?
3. What do the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness indicate for practice and policy?

Because this study is about music and relationships, I chose to use the ecological systems theory as a framework to examine the meaningful musical activities and relationships of the children in this study. The creator of this theory was Urie Bronfenbrenner, a developmental psychologist and leader in the analysis of the development of children. Bronfenbrenner created a model that allows for analysis of “the

phenomenon of continuity and change in human beings both as individuals and groups” (Bronfenbrenner, 2005/2001, p. 3). Bronfenbrenner (2005/1942) developed a model of interconnected systems, commonly known as the ecological systems theory (2005/1992, p. 106), to assist researchers in the analysis of children and the meaningful activities and relationships that contribute to their development. Bronfenbrenner defines a system as a particular setting and the interactions that occur in that setting. Bronfenbrenner’s model is most frequently illustrated through the image of a series of concentric circles, similar to Russian nesting dolls.

Bronfenbrenner’s original depiction of the ecological systems theory focused on interactions within a specific place. Neal and Neal’s (2013) illustration and revision of Bronfenbrenner emerges from thinking about common relationships in discrete social microsystem networks evidenced by the child’s interactions with others. Microsystem networks might be comprised of the family, church community, or a school community. Neal and Neal suggest that these networks may not be as neatly connected as the nested dolls model depiction. Neal and Neal’s revision allowed for incorporation of the multiple microsystem networks experienced by children in this study. More importantly, investigation based on relationship networks, per Neal and Neal, rather than a place as illustrated in Bronfenbrenner’s original work allowed for continuity of analysis throughout the fractured trajectory of the children’s lived experience. To analyze the data, I plotted the microsystems for each child in terms of their music making and the relationships that supported them, as illustrated in Chapter 5.

Children in this study experienced the fragmentation of their networks, formation of new networks, and continuation of previous networks across time and geographical separation. This study provided insight into the depth of loss of networks and hopes for the future held by both children and families, and it revealed barriers, challenges, and characteristics similarly reported in previous research.

In the remainder of this chapter, I provide a summary of findings and discuss implications for policy and practice. First, I summarize findings related to question one regarding music activities within the children's microsystem networks. Second, I describe findings for question two and recap the relationship networks that promoted or prevented music activities. Third, I will consider the implications of findings for policy and practice through the lens of the exosystem and macrosystem that emerged in this study. Finally, I will discuss insights and recommendations that became apparent following this investigation.

### **The Music Activities of Children Experiencing Homelessness**

The first question of the study was: What are the past, present, and imagined future musical lives of children experiencing homelessness? Children in this study expressed a desire to make music with others whether through a music ensemble, class, writing songs with their imagined bands, or being a Chicano hip-hop artist. They accessed music media in various ways, such as using smart phones to access YouTube, playing CDs, or listening to the radio. Some of them had current or prior school music experiences that they found rewarding and engaging, but some of them did not like their current school music experiences at all. Some children were cut off from school music



experiences by their current housing status. The music network connections for some children remained resilient amidst the housing challenges experienced by their families, a finding about resiliency similar to that of other researchers (Israel and Jozefowicz-Simbeni, 2009).

In Bronfenbrenner's theory, proximal processes are activities that occur repetitively that affect the child. Proximal processes related to music in this study included, singing, dancing, listening to music, playing instruments, saying chants during play, and performing on stage, whether at the shelter or at school, to make others proud. Some of the proximal processes became molar activities when the children assigned meaning to the activities. For example, children associated particular pieces or music styles with friends or family members who engaged in music activities with them; the activity of singing together becomes molar because of the value of the connection for the child. Children also indicated that particular songs had a special meaning, sometimes listening to songs repeatedly that expressed various emotions, communicated ideas of hope, and projected images of strength, resilience, and care for others. The mixture of molar activities was different for every child, which aligns with prior research that the homeless population is very diverse and heterogeneous (Hagen, 2015).

Some activities fostered a sense of self-respect through music engagement that consisted of at least one of the four components of the formation of dignity (Seltser & Miller, 1993): autonomy, predictability, self-expression, and social solidarity. During their time at Hope Corporate, children were given choice in both what and how they would engage with music (autonomy). Use of various media resources, consistently

available at Hope Corporate and sometimes available through their family resources (e.g., smart phones), provided them with even more options for participation and consistent access to music (predictability). Children were able to get “back to normal” activities more quickly (p. 103). The after-school care organization created space in their daily agenda for children to express themselves through engagement in music and dance activities (self-expression). Children wanted others at Hope Corporate to know their stories, but often became self-critical of their own efforts. Multiple times, participation in music activities (i.e. listening, singing, using iPad applications, or playing instruments) renewed broken relationships, sustained current bonds, or formed new connections with others (social solidarity).

Music activities experienced by the children also reinforced family traditions throughout their housing transition, such as singing favorite Christmas songs, a gypsy lullaby passed down from generations, or playing music at family gatherings. Families sometimes provided access to music such as Chicano hip-hop, experiences with string music, or what one child called an “Indian flute.” All parents of the children in this study hoped their children could engage in music in the future. These musical experiences were enduring, whereas the children’s school musical experiences were often fractured or held less meaning for them.

### **The Relationships of Children Experiencing Homelessness**

The second question of this study was: How are the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness reflective of the structures of the relationships in their lives? Children in this study encountered music through virtual and personal interactions with

others who supported, prevented, or collaborated with them in their music endeavors. Due to their age and social communication abilities, children were not always able to explicitly express the depth of meaning they held for a particular song or music activity; however, children were able to talk about the relationships in their lives that were connected with a particular music endeavor and expressed the depth of the relationship between themselves, others, and music engagement. Because music and relationships were intrinsically woven together, this study is about more than a list of musical activities a child did. This study is about both the content and meaning music held for the child as understood through their music and relationships.

Children in this study indicated a variety of connections created direct social networks. These networks included, media, immediate family, extended family, church community, school community, and shelter community people who provided support for children to continue to make music amidst housing instability. Dyadic relationships linked children both to others inside a particular network and often facilitated new links to other networks, such as when someone in the shelter helped a child form positive connections at school. Media personalities fueled their music interests but were not direct presences in the children's lives, though sometimes served as connections between children.

In this study, indirect linkage and exchange of what Bronfenbrenner identifies as interesting communication and interesting knowledge manifested in various ways. For example, an indirect virtual second-order network connection emerged between media sources and the child. Interactions between shelter administration, shelter

leaders/teachers, parents, children, and school personnel also provided indirect linkage, creating a second-order network of support for children. This occurred when shelter and school staff exchanged information about how to navigate various challenges that emerged for both parents and children that created interesting communications and interesting knowledge.

In this study, different networks sometimes fostered a different form of music engagement. Opportunities and opinions of other individuals in a particular network either empowered or negated various kinds music engagement. For example, relationship dyads that formed between both peers and caregivers and children influenced on music making and listening preferences illustrating an *affective relation*. Adult opinions about music informed what children listened to and how they accessed music. Parents also facilitated access to music through listening on various devices and provided instruments or other support for music exploration. Adults' opinions about musical engagement sometimes correlated to the child's perception of music. For example, if the adult advocated that particular kind of hip-hop music was good or bad, the child shared that view. When the parent listened often to country music, the child articulated a preference for country music. Hopes for future music making often aligned with what parents envisioned for their future, and in this study, parents supported their children when they performed at events at Hope Corporate.

The Hope Corporate and the Kids Club staff provided a social environment where children were praised for their music making and supported what they wanted to do. Hope Corporate also provided spaces and time for music activities as well as some kinds

of instruments and music resources. They also hosted numerous events for families throughout the year that provided families with opportunities to connect and share with one another through art, music, and dance, which had the potential to strengthen family networks during housing transition. Children were separated from extended families and church communities, however, which may have impacted their lived experience of music making when music was part of those micro networks. Children also sometimes found it difficult to connect with others in their current school communities, and although some children appeared to have strong connections to current or past school music communities, those relationships were fractured by the experience of homelessness.

Music provided a source for connection with the primary dyads in the lives of the children in this study, whether the other dyad member was physically close (parent, sibling, friend) or distant (grandparent, aunt). Some children perceived music as a tool to solidify current friendships and make new friends in the future. Their parents or caregivers often emphasized their support for their children to pursue their dreams, including their children's hopes to make music either individually or in an ensemble in the future.

### **Implications of Analysis**

The third question of this study was: What do the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness indicate for practice and policy? I use the notions of exosystem and macrosystem as a means of organizing this discussion. In Bronfenbrenner's theory, an exosystem is comprised of individuals in a system who influence the child, even though the child may not know the individuals. For example,

music educators and supportive stakeholders (publishers, composers, administrators, etc.) are part of the music education exosystem. I will examine this question through the lens of four different exosystems: educator and the education system; the continuum of care; government and government agencies; and the popular music industry.

**Exosystem: Music educators and education community.**

The exosystem of the music educators and the education community is comprised of teachers, administrators, school board members, publishers, caregivers, and other stakeholders who support the education of children. Ideally, if children are experiencing housing instability, the parents and district personnel should take steps to ensure that children remain in their school of origin to provide continuity in their lives. In previous studies, researchers found that children who frequently changed schools consistently demonstrated lower growth in academic areas such as reading and mathematics (Cutuli et. al., 2013; Fantuzzo et. al., 2012). This research supports Bronfenbrenner's assertion that the more stable and diverse dyadic relationships in a child's life, the better the child developed. While this is not always possible due to a variety of circumstances, children in this study who remained in their school of origin throughout the episode of housing disruption also retained the network connections that fostered their music learning. When children experience the trauma of homelessness and/or high mobility, educators can take steps to mitigate the effects of homelessness in the lives of children.

***Educators and the restoration of fractured connections.***

Educators are critical links in the lives of children. Children experiencing homelessness encountered severance of multiple dyads within their education networks

due to housing transience. One of the things that educators can do to repair fractured connections is to use the child's experience and interest to guide curricular practice. For example, children in this study wanted to continue to play instruments, but no longer had the opportunity to do so. They wanted to sing songs that were meaningful to them and to their friends but found that school music experiences were not aligned with those interests. Recognition of past experiences and successes in a school context may alleviate the sense of loss children encounter when experiencing homelessness, which is a time when children may sense emotions of fear about the future and grief over the loss of identity and loss of personal items (Hope & Young, 1986; Kozol, 1988; Masten, 1992; Van Ry, 1993).

Based on the observations and interactions in this study, I surmise that if a child can engage in music in a way that was supported in a previous relationship network, then the child is more likely to succeed in learning music and will more quickly identify with the learning community. This assertion aligns with findings of other researchers (e.g., Pickles, 2014) who recommend that educators foster relationships through the use of students' background knowledge and experiences to achieve learning goals. Instead of perceiving the child only from a deficit perspective, teachers can discover ways to musical strengths and what the child has done in the past to support current learning.

As a matter of practice, music educators could use songs and other music material that children find both accessible and engaging and that connect past experiences to future music explorations. In this study, children wanted to sing popular songs but were frustrated when they could sing only refrains and not the verses; they often walked away

from singing over frustration with the verses. Based on this observation, when including popular songs, teachers might arrange the music to only include portions of the songs that children can sing the most successfully to produce a sense of immediate accomplishment, then scaffold to include verses when appropriate.

As a matter of policy, schools need to develop processes for evaluating the interests and experiences of children when they arrive in the school environment. This is true for all children, but particularly for children experiencing homelessness who are looking for a way to connect with others. Children encounter unique situations before and during their families' experience of homelessness, requiring teachers, administrators, and staff to approach students on an individualized basis (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). During the intake process, administrators and school staff become aware of student needs and hopes for the future, and, based on the strength of dyadic relational connections around music as evident in this study, include music making in the conversation about the interests and experiences of children when they arrive in a school environment.

Future research could investigate more deeply the access and barriers that homeless and highly mobile students experience with respect school music education opportunities. Further research might also investigate the intake process to determine whether and how students' music interests, experiences, and backgrounds are accounted for during times of transition, whether they are encountering homelessness or some other form of moving from one school to another.



*Educators and formation of relational connections in, through, and around music.*

When children are experiencing fractured relationships due to uncertain housing status, educators can also help foster new connections and instill hope for an imagined future that communicates belief that the child is important. In this study, even if children struggled with their homelessness, they still hoped their lives would be different in the future. This finding is consistent with other researchers. Walsh (1992) discovered that children also dreamed of a different life and shared their story because they wanted others to value their lives. From a theoretical perspective, Bronfenbrenner (2001/2005) emphasized that both the objective qualities of the environment and subjective emotions experienced affect how children relate to self and others throughout their lives. Music is a source of emotional and relational connectivity. Engaging in music making can provide a source of hope through interest in a new activity where children can express themselves, rebuild their identity, and engender hope for the future, consistent with the more general recommendations of other researchers (Seltser & Miller, 1994).

As a practice, music educators might organize multiple opportunities for children to gain confidence both participating in classes, groups or ensembles, and, when appropriate, performing for their community. As evident in this study, children who are experiencing homelessness, and potentially other children as well, may be self-conscious when performing for others. Care should be taken to ensure public sharing or performing experiences are positive so that children experiencing homelessness, and all children, can shine and enjoy that others are proud of them. For children seeking to affirm, develop, or

re-establish relationships, connecting through performance may be important. Multiple times, participants in this study wanted others to focus on their performance, listen to their compositions or creations, or share conversation with a trusted adult. Providing space for children to hold the attention of caring adults is one step educators can take to help children regain their dignity, an essential component delineated by Seltser and Miller (1993).

As a policy, administrators need to ensure that music educators have the resources to develop a multifaceted music curriculum that allows for different kinds of engagement. What is the purpose for the music education curriculum? Is the goal of life-long music making or another performance goal for the children themselves? What are the knowledge and skills needed to provide children with the opportunities to reach that goal? How are the interests of children and families balanced with the interests of the education exosystem? Or, from the perspective of Bronfenbrenner's system theory, is the exosystem responsive to or completely unaware of the musical interests of children and families? Administrators, educators, and other stakeholders might re-evaluate the purpose or focus for children's music education.

The participants in this study were children experiencing homelessness who were also attending elementary schools. For the most part, they did not find their school music experiences compelling or connecting, which sometimes related to the kinds of music and sometimes to the types of activities they encountered. Based on this finding, I suggest that music educators consider how song material or other music literature and kinds of music engagement included in school music might fulfill the goals and meet the musical

interests of children experiencing homelessness and, in fact, all children. Do music educators need to use specific song material, or might other music literature fulfill the goals for a particular population? How might music educators and relevant stakeholders determine the most effective repertoire and activities that both capture the imagination and interests of children and to accomplish goals? Are curricular goals well aligned with contemporary musical interests outside of the school setting?

Based on the this study, the philosophical foundation for selection of songs and other musical material may need to expand to include a wide variety of content and styles. My own music teacher education background was heavily influenced by the pedagogy derived from Zoltán Kodály and others associated with him, who originally incorporated folk songs that were part of the child’s cultural background into their pedagogy—either sung with other children or by their families at home. We live now in a digital age, and the children in this study reported a wide variety of music that was part of their “personal inner music library” (Folkestad, 2012); families listened to a wide variety of music “at home” through all kinds of devices, and they shared family music practices ranging from folksongs passed down through three generations to contemporary hip hop. This *is* the inner aural library of children, and it cannot be ignored. In my current position as a music educator in a Title 1 low-income school, I have noticed that when I choose music that children have already heard at home, they learn the music much more quickly and are often very excited that we are singing familiar songs that remind them of their families.

How might consciousness of children's needs for support towards their cognitive, social, and emotional growth through music affect curriculum development and implementation? Could a curriculum be conceptualized in different ways, or how might music educators and relevant stakeholders need re-imagine curriculum or adapt instruction for particular groups of children? In what ways do teacher educators future teachers with the flexible instruction and thinking required for the multiply diverse student experiences and school contexts they will encounter?

As a matter of policy, the challenges that teachers of other academic learning disciplines experiences are also challenges for music educators when considering the children experiencing homelessness who are part of school system. These challenges, well documented in the literature, include identification of students experiencing homelessness, lack of records, transportation, coordination of services, and so on (Cunningham, 2013; Hayes-Whigham, 2006; Stronge, 2000; Tanabe & Mobley, 2011; Tars, 2009; Weber, 2014). These children encounter unique situations before and during their families' experience of homelessness, requiring teachers, administrators, and staff to approach students on an individualized basis (Murphy & Tobin, 2011). As noted earlier, the school should investigate students' hopes for the future in tandem with their current needs. This information might inform not only curricular decisions but could also help administrators and staff that children experiencing homelessness have access to all of the opportunities they are afforded through federal legislation. And, this information might also inform curricular decisions, including music instruction. Administrators could utilize previous connections with fine arts, both within school and elsewhere in children's lives

to mitigate the effects of network fragmentation: “Schools realize that much learning occurs outside the confines of the classroom, and extracurricular and recreational programs promote both educational and self-esteem development” (Vissing, 2000, p. 55).

In previous studies (Miller, 2011), adults experiencing homelessness often reported lack of knowledge about resources and services provided by local government or non-profit organizations. School districts may already ensure that homeless and highly mobile students have access to music learning opportunities, however, in order to remain compliant with federal mandates, school districts need to ensure that their homeless and highly mobile students (HHM) have consistent access to programs to develop desired music knowledge and skills. Students in the elementary school should have the same access to music making as housed children in the school.

***Educators and the classroom culture.***

Classroom teachers and staff can partner with parents to help children recognize strengths and overcome obstacles through provision of physical care, space, stability/security, autonomy/self-control, positive social interactions, and fostering of competency/creativity (Cutuli et al., 2013; Eddowes & Butcher, 2000; Israel & Jozefowicz-Simbeni, 2009; Masten et al., 2012; Miller, 2011; Pickles, 2014). During my observations, shelter staff utilized interactive activities which students could self-select to engage with others or learn independently. Perhaps, educators could provide children with options for participation and scaffold both content knowledge and class participation to meet students’ current capabilities to promote future growth.

The learning framework used by shelter staff reinforced research that indicates children experiencing homelessness require learning that fosters practical skills and engenders positive interactions with others, while providing a secure space (Eddowes & Butcher, 2000; Pickles, 2014). Teachers who maintain high expectations in an orderly and structured classroom where children can predictably learn and collaborate with others also improves academic success (Sakaris, 1999). Children need to know they are safe, they can express their emotions, and rebuild dignity through successful performance before they can access and retain content knowledge (Eddowes & Butcher, 2000; Murphy & Tobin, 2011; Pickles, 2014; Seltser & Miller, 1993).

Children in this study both wanted to perform and remained extremely apprehensive about performing while others were watching them. Multiple times, I observed children attempt to learn to play the keyboard or engage in a challenging activity and quickly lose interest without immediate success. On a different day, children tried to play or perform through singing or instruments and showed improvement. The more successful the children perceived themselves, the stronger the connection to a music activity. Teachers need to provide opportunities for children to shine, but also implement appropriate preparation to foster confidence in learning both in the classroom and community presentations.

As a practice, educators need to establish a safe environment that nurtures social skills, characteristics of both successful teachers of students experiencing homelessness (Pickles, 2014). Pickles (2014) found that teachers in successful classrooms for children experiencing homelessness fostered relationship connections and used small groups to

differentiate and support individual learning. Music educators can support the creation of new friendship connections to other students in the class through the use of small group collaborative learning and development of social skills. Teachers in successful classrooms for children experiencing homelessness fostered relationship connections and used small groups to differentiate and support individual learning (Pickles, 2014). Use of a “buddy system” to support the new child’s understanding of both class procedures and the current music making process can greatly assist in the transition to a new context. Music educators can also differentiate tasks for students that recently transitioned to the class in order to promote an initial sense of success and hope for future growth, as well as assign student mentors to assist with the transition.

In order to foster relationship connections, children experiencing homelessness sometimes require assistance to interact with others in a healthy way (Pickles, 2014). Teachers in this study helped children understand how others perceived their actions and coached them on how to make friends and build connections. All of the children in this study utilized music activities in some form to build relationship connections with others. Often, music performance or dance performance to music provided an opportunity for the child to engage in an activity that required all of the adults’ attention on their performance. In this study, children who sang to the karaoke machine wanted other children and adults to be the audience and listen to their performance. Music educators can utilize various classroom strategies that foster supportive music performance to provide children experiencing homelessness a safe place to gain confidence in self-expression.

Classroom materials could integrate strategies for social and emotional growth into their learning materials. For example, movement activities could include challenges that connect children to others in a meaningful way. Use of sentence stems to stimulate conversation may also be a helpful way to foster social skills in the classroom. For example, instead of saying, “Share your favorite candy with your partner,” students can ask each other questions, such as “What is your favorite candy?”

As a policy, administrators and school counselors must provide teachers with the support, strategies and resources available to meet the needs of children experiencing homelessness, including best practices documented in the literature cited above. One source for information and support for teachers should be a clearly identified local school liaison, often the school counselor or administrator, who is aware of support services for children in housing distress. Districts can include professional development on student homelessness, the *McKinney-Vento Act*, and the district’s policies and procedures to support their homeless and/or highly mobile student population.

***Educators and facilitation of communication.***

The educational community exosystem can also facilitate better communication between caregivers, teachers, the local liaison, and community partners—the continuum of care discussed in the next section. Both shelter and school personnel can assist in overcoming obstacles discussed in the literature (e.g., Cunningham, 2013) and described in the sections above. In this study, I was not able to observe the ways in which the school exosystem purposefully reached out to families at Hope Corporate or communicated with Hope Corporate staff. I did observe that the Hope Corporate staff



consistently worked to help children develop positive connections in all aspects of their lives, including connections to school, particularly through homework support. The development of social skills emphasized at Hope Corporate also may provide success for children in their school environments. Hope Corporate and the school exosystem failed children, however, in terms of after-school participation in music and other activities.

As a practice, teachers can attempt to connect with the child's caregiver and school liaison to identify and support school learning. As a policy, critics have found that identification of students experiencing homelessness and facilitating communication between all stakeholders involved remained the biggest challenges to the implementation of the McKinney-Vento mandate. The challenge for identification is to ensure parents and students can maintain their dignity and privacy about a situation over which they may experience negative emotions of shame and grief.

**Exosystem: Continuum of care group, stakeholders, and community members.**

Another exosystem is the continuum of care group which includes representatives from the school, shelter, staff, church, other non-governmental organization members, and community members, who may include people who have experienced homelessness in the past or present. Everyone needs to recognize the physical, mental, and emotional trauma and loss experienced due to episodes of homelessness. Homelessness is a traumatic episode in the life of the family because the experience dismantles the child's sense of safety and wellness required for healthy development and challenges parents' self-respect and perceived competence (Kozol, 1988; Masten, 1992). In response,

children may act out emotions of fear, anger, and grief over the loss of possessions and their identity as part of a stable home (Van Ry, 1993; Walsh, 1992). Parents also experience extensive trauma and stress while they attempt to navigate the system that may or may not provide support during this traumatic life event (Miller, 2011).

In this study of music and network relationships, children did not often blatantly discuss negative emotions or appear to be fearful. Children communicated loss in discussions of connections, both music and otherwise, and loss of possessions or opportunities. Only one child mentioned the darkness she and other friends at Hope Corporate sometimes felt.

While children shared nostalgic memories of joint activities with their families or school music communities, as well as nostalgic memories related to other parts of their lives, they often said that their lives were better since their stay at the shelter. Hope Corporate provided stability and a structured, clean, and safe environment where families present at the time could live together and know that their basic needs would be met. The children's expression of a "better" life since arriving at Hope Corporate indicated that Hope Corporate addressed their needs while fostering dignity and self-respect. Still, the shelter was a shelter, a temporary space, and children implied their longing for a sense of home and/or hope for tomorrow, often through their karaoke music choices.

Members of the continuum of care must intentionally preserve the dignity of the individuals who benefit from services provided (Hope & Young, 1986; Masten, 1992; Seltser & Miller, 1993). Homelessness can demean the parents' dignity and assault the child's perception of meaning in their lives. All who seek to provide support need to

remain cognizant of the potential damage of well-intentioned assistance. This study attempted to dignify the story of the child through inquiry about how the child previously had engaged with music and what they wanted to do in the future; children and parents told stories about their lives and gave meaning to their existence through music. Music therapists, music educators, and others who seek to provide support through music engagement should recognize that the children already have musical lives that are meaningful to them, and that contributions made by others are important and enable the child to succeed amidst challenging circumstances.

Once again, children in this study reported their lives had become better since coming to Hope Corporate. Instead of perceiving shame from living in a shelter, Hope Corporate provided a safe place for both children and adults to recover from previous traumatic experiences and make a fresh start for a better future. All of the parents I talked to wanted to share stories about their children and themselves and were hopeful for the future. One way to mitigate the effects of homelessness is for communities in our country to initiate and support more organizations like Hope Corporate—organizations that provide families a safe place to start again. As members of the community, we need to engage in advocacy and support for organizations and individuals that fulfill the needs of vulnerable families in our communities.

**Exosystem: Government organizations.**

The next exosystem I will discuss is the government and government organizations. One of the most well-known pieces of legislation about homelessness in the United States is the McKinney-Vento Act, which was passed in 1987 and was

intended in part to support students experiencing homelessness. Even though adherence to the mandate has improved student academic growth, after thirty years, school districts have never consistently implemented the mandates of this legislation.

Administrators also need a way to ensure that if current students experience homelessness, the school will mitigate the effects of transience on after-school learning opportunities (Mizerek & Hinz, 2004). According to the *McKinney-Vento Act*, the district must “promote practices that facilitate access by a student who is homeless or in substitute care to extracurricular programs, summer programs credit transfer series, electronic courses, and after-school tutoring programs at nominal or no cost” (United States Department of Education, p. 77).

Non-compliance for activities outside the regular school day, including music activities, remains a common occurrence due to a lack of federal funding support to maintain compliance with the *McKinney-Vento Act* (Anderson, Janger, and Pantan, 1995; Tars, 2009). Multiple times, researchers (Cunningham, 2013; Hayes-Whigham, 2006; Miller, 2011; Mizerek & Hinz, 2004; Tanabe & Mobley, 2011) have emphasized that districts and other community partners need to devise effective parent-school communication to more effectively notify parents of available support services for their children. Critics still advocate more awareness and better compliance to assist students effected by homelessness. Why is this still an issue? I suggest future research on the effectiveness and adjustments needed to determine the continued efficacy of the *McKinney-Vento Act*.

Educators cannot rely on district administrators to ensure the implementation of district policies and procedures to support students experiencing homelessness. Each parent, teacher, counselor, and administrator must continue to advocate and promote an equitable education for all students; this includes their music education. Music educators can connect with their campus liaison to determine the support available for their students experiencing homelessness and communicate mandated rights and privileges with their parents, regarding their music education, especially after-school activities and concerts

**Exosystem: Popular music industry.**

An additional exosystem for children in this study is the popular music industry. The children in this study are aware of popular music and accessed it all every day. But the popular music industry does not seem aware of these children. Popular musicians and industry artists could greatly assist in raising awareness and telling stories of children and youth experiencing homelessness. However, great care needs to be taken to prevent exploitation of children and their stories (Shane, 1996). Music industry artists can create art that is child-appropriate that inspires music making. They can also fund opportunities for sustained music engagement such as songwriting classes, instruments, and lessons that empower children to learn quickly through a hands-on approach.

**Macrosystem: Beliefs and Assumptions**

In Bronfenbrenner's theory, the macrosystem is the system of assumptions and beliefs that people hold that influence their interactions with each other. Seltser and Miller (1993) delineated both structural (exosystem, macrosystem) and individual factors (microsystem) that contributed to homelessness and assaulted the personal dignity of the

individual. In this study, both structural and individual factors caused fragmentation of music networks and exacerbated loss of the dignifying act of music expression. I have already discussed various implications from the analysis of interactions in the microsystem and exosystem. Now I will consider macrosystem assumptions and beliefs that may – consciously or unconsciously – guide thinking about children, homelessness, and music.

First, children’s beliefs about the value of various types of music making provided or precluded children from opportunities to make music. The assumption that children are musical beings who want to participate in music activities (e.g. singing, dancing, playing instruments, etc.) was affirmed in this study; children voluntarily engaged with music in multiple networks in their lives, and they spontaneously and voluntarily engaged in music making while in the Kids Den, the location of this study. Additionally, children who reported having no school music classes hoped to take music lessons in the future. Participants’ level of enthusiasm about school music class was not an indicator of their interest in making music at school or anywhere else in their futures. Fragmentation in their lives due to their experience of homelessness, did indicate ruptures in music experience, but did not diminish their desire to make music, even when expectations did not align with current reality.

Societies have always had to contend against assumptions that individuals experiencing homelessness are lazy, inept, or uncaring. Prior to my volunteering at the shelter, I assumed that children experiencing homelessness might be “out of control.” Also, because parents needed help, I subconsciously assumed that they did not care about

their children. These assumptions were an assault on their dignity of the children and their parents. This is a common experience. For example, preservice teachers held similar beliefs until they actually interacted with children in a shelter (Kim, 2012).

Teachers may hold similar negative assumptions about children experiencing homelessness. Scholars have found that teachers' interactions with students experiencing homelessness may result in either a negative perception (Lindley, 1994) or a positive perception (Green, Adams & Turner, 1988; Jackman & Crane, 1986) of this student characteristic. Yet I wonder whether cultural and social assumptions impact these findings. Yunker (1987) suggests that quality rather than the quantity of contact affects teachers' perception of self-efficacy and students themselves. Researchers need to re-evaluate assumptions and perceptions in our current school climate to articulate the underlying macrosystem of beliefs and assumptions that affect classroom practices (microsystem). Multiple positive contacts with children experiencing homelessness may alter beliefs and assumptions (Kim, 2012), foster better connections between the teacher and student, resulting in improved academic and social growth in the life of a child (Sakaris, 1999).

Music educators may find benefit in the examination of their own beliefs and assumptions about the best approaches for facilitate music making. For example, when I first visited the shelter in 2015, I assumed that in order for children to play the keyboard, which they wanted to do, they needed to know the names of the notes. My assumption was driven by my own prior experiences of keyboard pedagogy more than it was about my beliefs about children. I wrote out the letter names for various songs, such as "Jingle

Bells,” which the children adamantly ignored, and they played and learned in spite of me. They wanted me to play while they copied my hands. I questioned my beliefs about what was valuable to the children in that moment. When I later returned to the shelter in 2016 to begin this study, I allowed the children to guide how they wanted to learn. This experience was a good reminder that assumptions about what constitutes “progress” and what is “good” music education needs to be questioned. Multiple pathways to achieve any goal exist. Rather than relying on assumptions, music educators working with children how are experiencing homelessness must find ways to build on children’s musical selves, which are always present, and to help them experience immediate success, so that they continue to connect to music, and through music to other people, throughout their transient experience.

I have thought a great deal about the kinds of music that are in the ears and minds and hearts of children. Music educators cannot assume that students in their classroom know “Hot Cross Buns” or “Mary Had A Little Lamb,” but they may all know the Gummy Bears song. Children may also connect emotionally to music that reminds them of family members (Janata, 2009) or other important people in their lives, such as the connection a child in this study felt to her of a grandmother in Mexico via songs in Spanish. This discussion does not imply that teachers should only use music from the latest YouTube phenomenon or only choose songs in Spanish. It does suggest that teachers need to expand their own knowledge to include a wealth of diverse music in order to connect students’ current knowledge to future music learning. The Kodaly approach to teaching assumes that all music learning starts with the “mother tongue” of



the child and expands to further music exploration of music. The “mother tongues” of today’s children are rich, diverse, media-informed, and family and connected to their communities. I am constantly reminded of John Cena’s experience of music. In a school he left, he enjoyed music classes, which were diverse in kinds of engagement and styles of music. He saw himself as musical and enjoyed performing on stage. Now does not like music class because, from his perspective, they did not do anything except sing the school song Music had been meaningful, and was still meaningful, just not between himself and his music teacher, which caused fragmentation of connections to the current school music network and affect his possibilities for music making through the secondary level, even though his mother dreams of this kind of engagement.

### **Future Studies on Homelessness, Music, and Music Education**

Children in this study reported a variety of interests in music making. All participants used the karaoke machine and iPad when available. They played songs they previously learned or that I helped them on the keyboard. They said they created wrote their own songs or wanted to learn to write their own songs. Some had school ensemble experiences, including positive experiences performing at previous schools, though their engagement was disrupted or entirely prevented, at the time of this study, by their housing status. They had many ideas, and so did their parents, about future participation. This study was conducted in the context of a shelter. Future studies in a school context could explore questions about how children experiencing homelessness or high housing mobility in experience school music programs, including opportunities, engagements, access, and barriers these students encounter. A replication of Pickle’s (2014) study on

successful classroom practices that contain HHM children with a focus on elementary music classrooms may be feasible.

Music researchers have found that early music intervention enhances development of auditory processing, language development, and microsystem dyad connection between the caregiver and the child (Anvari et al., 2001; Hallam, 2010; Vitala & Partanen, 2018). Bronfenbrenner proposed that the child should be exposed to a wide variety of connections for maximum positive development. Young children experiencing homelessness may not have access to music education at all, let alone music experiences, or even educational experiences, that best foster development. The participants of this study were in grades three through six. Studies that include younger children could yield insights for practitioners and policy makers alike.

Similarly, a study at the secondary level would be useful. Student experiencing homelessness should have the same access to music making as housed children in the school, and in this study, even at the elementary level, access to school music ensembles that required after-school participation was thwarted. A wide disparity may exist between after-school music opportunities available to higher versus lower income level. Families in this study could not afford lessons and, even if access was free, could not afford the time away from employment to provide transportation to and from lessons or school activities. This remains an issue of the disparity not only between students experiencing homelessness and their housed peers, but may also be disparity between students attending Title I schools and those attending schools that serve a higher income bracket, of even between students from families with different financial means within the same

school. While not specifically a problem of a HHM students, the types of schools, family income, opportunities for participation in school music programs, and housing opportunities may influence school music participation, or even community music participation, and hence music development. More research investigating these questions is needed.

This study occurred in the context of a shelter, and during this study, children displayed interest in music making. My role in this study was not to teach them directly, but rather to facilitate their interests as a participant-observer. However, I often thought about how more direct assistance to develop their musicianship might have been useful to them. Simple skills such as how to access the head voice for tuneful singing, a dedicated time to learn songs on the piano, or more guidance in the use of iPads to make their own beats could have made a difference in their music perceptions of self-efficacy in music making and in the realization of their dreams of music performance. Studies of after-school or community-based programs that serve children who are experiencing homelessness, whether meant for them solely or not, could provide support not only programmatic support but also information about how music experiences intersect with aspects of their development and how music engagement might help to overcome the traumatic experience of homelessness and thrive throughout their lives.

In this study, I relied on Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory as a framework. Other theoretical frameworks may also be useful for examining music, children, and homelessness. For example, Bourdieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) theorized that individuals gained all knowledge needed for upward mobility from family

members or formal schooling. Members of middle- and upper-class society accumulated knowledge that allowed them to continue to grow in wealth and status, while children from low-income and/or diverse backgrounds did not have the knowledge or “cultural capital” to transcend their socio-economic and social status. In education, Bourdieu’s idea that children of low-income communities lack an inherent cultural capital needed to be successful intersects with the assumption that children from low-income and/or diverse communities come to school with a deficit in their knowledge and understanding about the world.

Yosso (2006) considered Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital through the lens of critical race theory and proposed that Bourdieu’s theory based all standards for mobility on white cultural norms for social status and mobility. Yosso identified six areas of capital derived from community cultural wealth: aspirational capital, linguistic capital, familial capital, social capital, navigational capital, and resistant capital. Yosso’s community cultural wealth framework could provide space for recognizing the contributions made by others that enable the child to succeed amidst the challenging circumstances of homelessness.

Awareness of the inherent wealth within the child’s community may indicate untapped resources and recognized the dignity of all who contribute to the child’s development. For example, from a community cultural wealth perspective, children in this study retained music network connections obtained from their families, school, and shelter community. Multiple families had musical practices of their own, and multiple parents supported their children’s musical interests and transferred aspirational capital to

their children. John Cena's mother, Verona, wanted to see him play the drums in the marching band. Seara's mother, Shandra, helped her develop a business plan for selling her drawings. Maria's mother consistently said, "She can do anything she wants." In addition to aspirational capital, Maria's mother, Estrella, a promoter for Chicana(o) hip-hop artists could assist Maria with what she needed to succeed in the industry. Estrella was able to give Maria aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, and navigational capital. Analysis of capital both gained from networks and lost from fragmented networks can indicate areas for needed network expansion for optimum growth.

### **Reflexivity and Reflection**

When I share about this dissertation topic with other music teachers, the frequent response is, "You can do your dissertation on that?" "You can just do your dissertation on anything?" or "What does this have to do with teaching music?" My answer is that this study is about music education because it is about children and the meaning music has in their lives. Homelessness can happen to anyone without an extensive safety net given the right circumstances. The number of children experiencing homelessness has doubled in the last ten years. More and more children in the classroom face this traumatic life event, while educators and parents remain unaware of services districts are required to provide, and legislators continue to ensure only limited funding to fulfill federal mandates. Homelessness *is* a problem in our communities. Duffield admonishes that "Without the active participation of teachers, administrators, parents, policy makers, and advocates, the rights conferred by the McKinney-Vento Act are merely theoretical" (2000, p. 204).

Anecdotally, multiple teachers have approached me to share about their experiences with homelessness. At a conference, a recently-graduated college music major discussing a poster presentation of this research with me wished that this research and information had been available to her high school teachers. She had experienced homelessness in high school and missed out on opportunities to participate in elite ensembles due to her lack of available transportation—a problem that should not have occurred had the district been (and the teachers) been informed of (and adhered to) the provision of the McKinney-Vento Act.

I share with other educators my own experiences of working with children experiencing homelessness in the classroom. While writing this document, I also served as an elementary general music teacher and taught twelve students who received assistance through the *McKinney-Vento Act*. While I did know the details of their individual stories, this study guided my understanding and awareness of how to support their development as musical human beings, whether I was in the role of co-musician, audience, advisor, and/or advocate. I hope that other teachers may also find insights in this document.

I have reflected often about how teachers are prepared (or not) for thinking about homelessness. Teacher education programs prepare college students for ideal classrooms that rarely exist, especially in school districts where low-socioeconomic status students are the majority, and homelessness or high mobility due to housing instability can occur. Educators need to develop strategies that differentiate for the needs of this vulnerable population. Academic success for all students requires teachers to consider their students’

worldviews and perspectives in order to connect past experience with current learning (Campbell, 2010). Homelessness is no different than any other exceptionality or need that may exist among students in any classroom.

After listening to the stories of nine children and talking with their parents, the most important factor that contributed to their musical engagement was their relationships in their lives. Regardless of the music education they received at school (and sometimes in spite of the music education they received at school), all children engaged in music activities to connect with others either in a virtual or physical way. Even though this study was about children experiencing homelessness, the power of music to sustain and form connections with others can apply to children from any background. Relationships are formed through music making, and healthy relationships are important to the healthy growth and development of children.

In this study, students experiencing homelessness reported a wide variety of music interests. Due to increased access that all students have to all kinds of music through media networks and their family and community networks, educators cannot assume students prefer any particular type of music. Educators may not be able to sufficiently explore all the potential music interests of their students; however, music educators can provide space in curriculum development and lesson planning to listen to the suggestions of their students for about repertoire and kinds of musical engagements that interest them, and then provide related and relevant opportunities for music making. Each school, each context, each student population is unique and cannot be duplicated. However, music educators can develop habits of listening and adapting their curriculum to meet the needs

of children to make great music together. My most important insight is this: *Making music must be meaningful to matter.*

Lastly, with over 1.3 million children in America experiencing homelessness every year, we cannot afford to become complacent. Music educators can provide leadership to support the whole child and their family through the traumatic experience of homelessness. Educators can use music to help rebuild the lives of children experiencing homelessness rebuild the relationships, confidence, and life skills through self-expression, creative music-making, and performance. Music makers of all kinds can give their time to provide access to music making for children experiencing homelessness—access to music making that fosters autonomy, predictability, self-expression, and social solidarity, as well as the goal of music making for all children. All of us must recognize and identify the messages of our own beliefs and assumptions, reject errant thinking, and embrace individuals and families experiencing homelessness with dignity and build bridges between members of our communities, our country, and our world.



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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS ADAPTED FROM *SONGS IN THEIR HEADS*

Potential Interview Questions  
(Adapted from *Songs in Their Heads*, p. 281-282)

Name of child (actual name, for my records only):  
Pseudonym (assigned for the report):  
Gender:  
Ag/grade:  
Appearance:  
Interview setting:  
Shelter Pseudonym:  
Shelter Staff:  
Parent/Guardian:

General Questions for Children

1. What do you like most about school? Least?
2. What do you like to do outside of school?
3. What are you really good at?
4. What do you want to be when you grow up?

Musical Questions for Children

5. Do you like music? Why?
6. How does music make you feel?
7. Is music important to you? Why?
8. Do you sing? What do you sing?
9. Where do you usually sing (home, church, school)? \*\*\*
10. Will you sing a favorite song for me?
11. How many songs do you know?
12. How did you learn these songs?
13. Do you play a musical instrument? Which one(s)?
14. Do members of your family play a musical instrument? Which one(s)?
15. Do members of your family sing? What do they sing?
16. Do you listen to music? Where? When?
17. Do you like to dance to music? What kind of music do you dance to?
18. Do you make music with your family?
19. Do you make music with your friends?
20. Do you sing or play music in school?
21. Do you sing or play music outside of school?
22. Do you go to sleep with music? What kind?
23. Do you like fast/slow music? Loud/soft music?
24. What kind of music do your parents listen to? Siblings?
25. Do you every just think about music? What do you think?
26. Do you have any tapes/CDs/videos/recordings? What kind?



27. What kinds of music do you look up on YouTube or other websites? \*\*\*
28. What are all the ways you use music in your life?
29. If you had \$\_\_\_\_\_ to spend on music, what would you buy?
30. What do you really want to know about music?

### Parents/Guardians Interviews

Name of child (real, for my records only):

Pseudonym (assigned for the report):

Gender:

Ag/grade:

Appearance:

Interview setting:

Shelter Pseudonym:

Shelter Staff:

Parent/Guardian:

### Potential Musical Questions for Parents/Guardians

1. Does your child like music? Why?
2. Is music important to him/her?
3. Does he/she sing? What does he/she sing?
4. Where does he/she usually do music things (home, church, school)? \*\*\*
5. What does he/she sing?
6. Do he/she play a musical instrument? Which one(s)?
7. How did he/she get into music?
8. What kind of music do you wish your child could do?

APPENDIX B  
RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

Document: Recruitment Script

Study Title: Music in the Lives of Children Experiencing Homelessness

Researcher: Corrie Box

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study because your child is part of an after-school program in a temporary residence. This study will explore the musical lives of children experiencing homelessness in order to better understand children and music and establish a foundation for future studies.

Children will have opportunities to engage in music activities during their normal after-school program. Children will be invited to interview with the researcher 2-4 times for 20-30 minutes. The researcher will also interview parents to gain their perspective on music in their children's lives.

All music activities and interviews will be audio recorded. If you participate in this study, both parents/guardians and children may choose an alternate name (pseudonym) or be assigned one by me to protect your identities. I will also assign an alternate name for this temporary residence. You and your child can leave the study at any time and your child can still participate in music activities. I cannot promise any direct benefits. However, your stories can help researchers better understand music in the lives of children.

APPENDIX C  
CHILD ASSENT FORM

Music and Children Experiencing Homelessness

I have been told that my parents (mom or dad or guardian) have given permission (said it's okay) for me to take part in a project about music and children. This project will help the researcher learn about music and me so children can have more music in their lives.

I will be asked to talk with the researcher about the music in my life. We will meet 2-4 times for 20-30 minutes.

I will allow the researcher to audio record our music activities and interviews.

I understand that my identity will be protected. An alternate name for my shelter will be used. I can choose an alternate name for myself that will be used in research and presentations.

I am taking part because I want to. I know that I can stop at any time if I want to and it will be okay if I want to stop. I can still participate in music activities but stop talking about my music. Anything that is recorded after that time will be erased.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sign Your Name Here

\_\_\_\_\_  
nt Your Name Here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pri

APPENDIX D

PARENT CONSENT/PARENT PERMISSION FORM

Dear \_\_\_\_\_:

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Sandra Stauffer in the School of Music at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to explore music in the lives of children experiencing homelessness. The purpose of this form is to provide you with information that will help you decide if you will give consent for you and your child to participate in this research.

I am inviting you and your child's participation in this study, which will involve:

- Participation in music activities by your child during normal after-school care.
- Interviews with your child 2-4 times for 20-30 minutes.
- Interviews with you 2-4 times for 20-30 minutes. If you choose not to be interviewed, your child may still be interviewed with your permission.

Interview questions will be about music your child enjoys and music in your child's life and your life. We may also ask questions about music they make during the after-school program. I may also make some notes about what your child does during the after-school program as part of the research process.

You and your child's participation in this study are voluntary. You and your child may decline participation at any time. You may also withdraw yourself or your child from the study at any time and your child may still participate in music activities during normal after-school care. Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty.

We are also asking your permission to record the interviews. Only the research team will have access to the recordings. The recordings will be deleted immediately after being transcribed and any published quotes will be anonymous. To protect your identity, please refrain from using names or other identifying information during the interview. Let me know if, at any time, you do not want to be recorded and I will stop

Although there may be no direct benefit to you or your child, the possible benefit of you and your child's participation is the opportunity to share your story, which may help others have more music opportunities.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you and your child's participation.

Responses will be confidential. The results of this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name and your child's name will not be used. All shelter locations will be assigned an alternate name. Also, both you and your child may select an alternate name (pseudonym) that the researcher will use in all communication about this study.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call Corrie Box at *[cell phone number]* or Dr. Sandra Stauffer at *[cell phone number]*.

Sincerely,

Corrie Box and Dr. Sandra Stauffer

By signing below, you are giving consent for you and your child \_\_\_\_\_ (Child's name) to participate in the above study. You are giving permission for the researcher to audio record you and your child during music activities and interviews.

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Signature Printed Name Date

If you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.