STREET NEEDS: ARE HAWAI'I HOMELESS TEENS INFORMATION POOR?

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DEDICATION

To my father, Joseph Raymond Heck. My first teacher, mentor, and hero.

I know it's a little late, but I finally did it Dad. Love you always and forever.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

Youth today are growing up in a digital age. With the advancement of technologies, the world seems interconnected – information at our fingertips. Is this the same with our homeless population though? Notably lacking economic capital, is it the same with information? This study employs a qualitative approach in understanding Hawai'i homeless youths and their access to information. With inspiration from Julie Hersberger's work, "Are the Economically Poor Information Poor? Does the Digital Divide affect the Homeless and Access to Information?" this study looked to ask similar questions to a younger demographic. A total of 15 homeless youths (13-18 years of age) were interviewed, sharing stories from their day to day lives. Along with their technology use, teens were motivated to openly speak of their problems, living situations, and what they see in the future.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

For the past several years, varying stories on the issue of homelessness has plastered news and social media portals. Stories report on the "clean-up of Waikiki", issues with tourism, one-way tickets home with pictures visualizing tent covered sidewalks and sleeping persons on Honolulu beaches. (Homeless in Honolulu, 2014; Nagourney, 2016; Gajewski, 2014) Though a paradise to many, unfortunately as any Hawai'i local will tell you there is a price to living in paradise. *The Economist* featured an article titled "Homeless in Hawaii: Paradise lost" *that* clearly states this issue. Though Hawai'i has a jobless rate of only 5%, the islands also feature high living costs with the median price of a two-bedroom apartment in Honolulu, O'ahu being more than $1800. (Paradise Lost, 2014)

Anecdotally, I can say from personal experience that I see this first hand on almost a daily basis. In my efforts to understand the homeless population, I began volunteering at the Institute of Human Services – an organization in Honolulu town that provides housing and various educational class options for homeless individuals. Volunteering for a job search class I became a coach and mentor, helping homeless persons of all ages in developing resumes, interview skills, and helping in the application process. In helping many attain jobs (or even two!) I have found it takes many months, if not years for someone to get off the streets and even then, it's in assisted living.

With this being said, I felt the need to focus my study on Hawaii's young people. As cliché as it may sound, the youths of today are tomorrow's future. In just a few years our young adults today will make up our government, educational system, activists – our leaders. A young person regardless of their circumstances should be given the opportunity to make a future for

themselves. Unfortunately, when someone is on the street the future is something of an afterthought. Immediacy is needed so that they can provide themselves basic human needs such as food, water and shelter (Woelfer et al., 2008).

According to the National Alliance to End Homeless approximately 550,000 unaccompanied, single youth and young adults under the age of 24 experience homeless episodes longer than a week within a year. Of this number, it is estimated the 380,000 are under the age of 18 (Youth, 2016). Results from the 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress found that 170,820 children and youth under the age of 24 years old are on the street (AHAR, 2016). In addition, Oliviera and Burke (2009) estimate that there may actually be 1.7 million homeless youth in the United States. Which number is correct? Unfortunately, there is no definite answer. Homeless youth are extremely transient and very difficult to identify. According to an interview with Alika Campbell of the Youth Outreach center in Waikiki, youth tend to seamlessly blend within crowds. Youth as young as 11 years old walk amongst the streets in Waikiki tending to want the same things their housed counterparts may have - thus their affinity for nice clothing and even technology (A.Campbell, personal communication, February 4, 2014). Youth are also much more opposed to disclosing that they are homeless in comparison to older homeless individuals. This results in the almost impossible task of accurately counting homeless youths. Rather than a number, the hope of this project is to capture a voice, not to quantify. Though homelessness in Hawaiʻi is considered a hot issue, legislation tends to lack the voice of those whom this situation most affects – the ones without a roof to call their own (Hodgetts et al., 2008). If a general voice is missing, you can bet that the youth are almost invisible. Studies have been implemented in Hawaiʻi but there is a lack of

research focusing on the youth population. In doing this type of research I strive for this study to begin to close the gap in this missing knowledge.

Research Problem

This study examined Hawaiʻi's homeless youth in terms of their use of information communication technologies (ICTs). This qualitative interview study sought to understand the population's technology patterns, specifically in regards to devices primarily used for communication purposes (i.e. mobile phones, computers, etc.). The hope is that the patterns found in regards to device usage can be connected to homeless youth's every day issues and needs allowing for the possibility of solutions through technology. This may be an application that showcases different service schedules, an online GRE prep class or something we may not have thought of yet. The idea is to understand the population at their level, to have a conversation and in essence talk about their biggest problems and what we can do to alleviate stresses, so that finding a home is more manageable.

Research has been done in terms of youth street culture and survival, but little study has been done in terms of actual ICT use (Karabanow & Naylor, 2010). This study examined homeless youth culture in relationship to technologies and how they are used (or not used) on a daily basis. Rather than looking at differences between populations or even the negatives of being homeless, the conversations in this study have the opportunity to help create educated solutions to homeless issues. Through this project we can conclude that the homeless population is wired. Few studies have examined the benefits of basic social networking and computer usage in acquiring needs thus the urgency for exploration on the subject with our Hawaiʻi youth.

The study also continues to explore Hawai'i homelessness in an academic light. As discussed in the literature review, there are many stories and statistics in terms of Hawai'i's homelessness. Though this is the case it can be noted that in recent years little research has specifically been done on the youth population in regards to published papers. Youth and young adult homelessness has been explored in terms of use of technologies, but in areas like Los Angeles or New York City (Kennedy et al., 2015; Anderson, 2013). It is important to also explore the similarities and differences in terms of usage of technologies as well as other aspects in comparison to our mainland counterparts.

Continuing, it can be argued that ICT literacy has become essential in being successful in a socio-economic sphere in this new era of information (Parayil, 2005). We are now in a digital age where utilization of ICTs is key. We note that through the usage of ICTs we can bridge and bond relationships (Ellison et al, 2007) and access different education and skill opportunities. Milton (2003) argues that ICT skills are the key to individuals becoming a success in this new labor marketplace. With this idea coupled with homeless young adults lacking basic work skills (Karabanow et al., 2010) we can only conclude that the knowledge and access of ICTs will have an important impact on youth getting off the street.

This study explores how young adult homeless persons in the city of Honolulu use and access ICTs. It's also the goal to explore what these persons may believe could be useful in terms of gaining knowledge or access to knowledge in relation to these technologies.

Research Objective

The objectives of this project were to explore the following:

1. To gain a better understanding of which information sources homeless youth
    pursue in their everyday lives.

2. To understand the information needs of Hawai'i homeless youths.

3. To examine if a lack of Internet access results in homeless youth being
    "information poor" in terms of their everyday life information seeking.

4. To identify if homeless youth perceive themselves to be "information poor" due
    to lack of access to digital information.

CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This review examines homelessness both in the United States and specifically in Hawai'i. It looks at what data we have on the population, the mass number of homeless persons throughout the country, and how this population is broken up via different life circumstances (i.e. veteran status, chronic homelessness, etc.). This paper observes homeless youth (also known as the "lost generation") and what makes up their social networks. It additionally addresses how this population uses technology in their everyday life. Lastly, this paper draws upon the research methods used in the collection and understanding of data acquired from the one on one interviews implemented in this study.

What does it mean to be Homeless?

According to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (2011) a person is considered homeless if they reside at the following:

- In places not meant for human habitation, such as cars, parks, sidewalks, abandoned buildings (on the street).

- In an emergency shelter.

- In transitional or supportive housing for homeless persons who originally came from the streets or emergency shelters.

- In any of the above places but is spending a short time (up to 30 consecutive days) in a hospital or other institution.

- Is being evicted within a week from a private dwelling unit and no subsequent residence has been identified and lacks resources and support networks needed to obtain housing.

- In a treatment facility or a jail/prison, in which the person has been a resident for more than 30 consecutive days and no subsequent residence has been identified and the person lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing.

- Is fleeing a domestic violence housing situation and no subsequent residence has been identified and lacks the resources and support networks needed to obtain housing.

This definition is not your typical, in that it includes fleeing from a hostile environment and those who are losing their primary residence. It encapsulates situational experiences. Swenson, et al. (2005) described homelessness as an issue of poverty, housing, job-skills and health care. It covers all of these facets, which in a sense showcases the causes of homelessness as well as the problems that occur because of situations. The definition encompasses many; people who are seen sleeping on or near street corners, those who have run away from home, those who benefit from organizational shelters, even those who sleep on different friend's couches night to night. In society, there are those who believe that homelessness is brought upon by one's own self. The above definitions showcase the difficulties that lead to becoming homeless – articulating that this situation is not a self-problem but an economic one.

Land of the Free and Homeless

According to the 2016 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress the point of time count found that 549,928 individuals were homeless in the United States. A point in time count means that one day a year (for 2016 it was late January) shelter and transitional housing administrative records are calculated as well as groups of volunteers go out into their respective communities and count the number of homeless on the street to get an estimate of the number of overall homeless in their area. The numbers of each community are combined

statewide allowing us to estimate the amount of homeless in our country. This number is just an estimate of the staggering numbers of homeless in the United States due to the population being transient and sometimes unidentifiable.

When the number of homeless during the point in time count is broken down we find that 373,571 persons are in shelters and transitional housing and 176,357 persons are living in unsheltered locations. Percentage wise this means that 68 percent were living in shelter locations, while 32 percent were living unsheltered on the streets. The report also concludes that 22 percent of this population were under the age of 18 years old, 9.1 percent were between the ages of 18 to 24, and the remaining 68.9 percent were 25 years of age and older. The report positively states that homelessness (at least according to the point of time system) has decreased 2.6 percent from last year- 14,780 people. It is also interesting to note that it was found that there was a 1.8% increase in those who identified as unsheltered. (AHAR, 2016)

If the number represented is only a portion of those truly homeless, it's alarming to think of how many are on the streets. Under the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights people have the right to adequate housing (UDHR, 1948). According to Abraham Maslow's Theory of Human Motivation (1943) the basic physiological needs of a human being are food, water and shelter. The fact that the homeless have difficulties acquiring food, water and shelter is an important human rights issue. Homeless on the streets do not always have open access to basic needs putting even the employed out of house and home. With this many people on the streets it is hard to believe that adequate and affordable shelter is available to everyone.

Homelessness in Hawai'i Nei

Among Hawai'i streets we have an abundance of homelessness- many living among our Hawai'i tourist spots. Hawai'i is thought to be a much easier place to live for homeless due to survivable outside weather conditions (Couch, 2014). In a sense this is true, but not having secured shelter can still result in being rained on, stolen property, and physical and mental pain. Even if it may be considered easier to be homeless in Hawai'i Nei, people can still starve, become dehydrated and be kicked about from their squatting area at any given moment (Blair, 2015). Homelessness regardless of setting is a difficult situation.

According to the State of Hawaii 2016 Statewide Homeless Point-in-Time Count there has been increases of homelessness across our Hawai'i island chain. The objective of the count was to obtain an accurate estimate of sheltered and unsheltered homeless populations in Hawaii. It was completed on January 24, 2016 in which counts of unsheltered and sheltered took place. Volunteers were scouted from various organizations and institutions where they were trained in how to do the survey and speak with homeless subjects.

The State of Hawai'i saw increases throughout the island chain amounting in a 4% overall rise. This is the 5th consecutive increase since 2011 with a 28% overall increase. The number of unsheltered homeless fueled the increase this year with a 12 percent rise. We also note that there were double digit increases on Kaua'i (30%) and Hawai'i island (12%).As stated above this is just an estimate and may actually be higher than presented. It also must be considered that the homeless represented in this study are those who are willing to admit their homelessness and fill out a questionnaire. This year's questionnaire also allowed participants to self-disclose racial identity. As past initiatives to help in solving the homelessness problem

included plane tickets home to the continental United States it is interesting that the majority of persons accounted for in this study are Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (Couch, 2014). Honolulu was also found to have the highest number of persons homeless per smaller city, county and regional Continuum of Care's Statewide Hawai'i .The state has the 2nd highest rate of unsheltered homeless coming behind California and Oregon at 54.4% and is also one of four states to have the largest increases in homelessness since 2007 at 30.5%. (AHAR, Pg.13).

Hawai'i also has many directives to help mitigate the problem. In July 2011, through an executive order by Governor Neil Abercrombie, The Hawai'i Interagency Council on Homelessness (HICH) was formed. This council is composed of state department directors, federal agency representatives and community leaders who have been tasked with finding solutions to end homelessness. Hawai'i was the first to create an agency patterned in likeness to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). Besides its primary council, it is also informed by service providers, community members, volunteers in the field, and best practices utilized nationally. (Benefit, n.d.)

The HICH has adopted a plan that is consistent with the approach taken by the USICH. This plan consists of four goals, 11 objectives, and 39 strategies. These goals are:

- Retool the homeless crisis response system
- Increase access to stable and affordable housing
- Increase economic stability and self-sufficiency
- Improve health and stability

In addition to these goals the state also executed a Permanent Supportive Housing Program (PSHP) Pilot during the June 2012- June 2013 period. Established utilizing Hawai'i's Housing

First Special Fund, it adopted a housing-first approach that hoped to help in the mission to stop chronic homelessness. The pilot was implemented with 60 chronically homeless households (71 individuals) on Oʻahu. The approach accomplished mostly positive results. In December 2013 16 clients (22.5%) remained in the pilot program while 37 clients (52.1%) had moved into other permanent housing. 18 clients (25.3%) unfortunately left the program without achieving permanent housing. Note that the definition of Chronicity in this pilot meant that the client was either continuously homeless for 12 months or more or had experienced 4 or more episodes of homeless in the past 3 years (with the current episode being shorter than the 12 months).

Besides the government initiatives, many organizations provide support to the homeless population on the island. These organizations include state and national programs, religious entities, non-profits and other grant funded programs. Many of these supporters helped in the organization and implementation of the 2016 Point-in-Time (PIT) Count. Oʻahu organizations include: Aloha United Way, Alternative Structures International, Bennet Group, C.Peraro Consulting, LLC, Catholic Charities Hawaii, CHOW Project, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Family Promise Hawaii, Hale Kipa, Honolulu Community Action Program, Hawaii Community Foundation, Hawaii DHS, Homeless Programs Office, Hawaii Interagency Council of Homelessness, Hawaii Job Corps, Helping Hands Hawaii, Holomua Na Ohana, Hoomau Ke Ola, HOPE Inc., Housing Solutions Inc., Hybrid International, LLC, The Institute for human Services (IHS), Kalihi Palama Health Center, Kealahou West Oʻahu, Mental Health Kokua, Pacific Islander Ministry, Project Date, River of Life, Salvation Army, Steadfast Housing Development Corporation, University of Hawaii, USVETS, Inc, Waianae Coast Comprehensive Health center, Waikiki Health Center,

Waimanalo Health Center, Windward Homeless Coalition, and Women in Need. (Statewide PIT, 2016)

Newspaper articles and television exposés have also plastered Hawaii's news. Articles with their vivid pictures focus on the effect homelessness has on tourism and different visitor complaints. Stories focus on the demand from businesses and companies to find a solution for homelessness, specifically in Waikiki. Specialized reports and exposes are more recently focusing on different families and the transitions they go through, but this is much less in comparison to hotel deals and new government issues (Couch, 2014; Gajewski, 2014; Homeless in Honolulu, 2014; Nagourney, 2016; Vorsino, 2015).

It can be said that Hawai'i has taken an active role in the mission to end homelessness, but nonetheless as stated above the state has still seen increases in homelessness all around. Be this due to a number of persons migrating to Hawai'i, chronic homelessness, or housing being too costly is unknown. It is most likely various factors as circumstances can differ between persons.

Will the real Homeless youth please stand up?

According to Oliviera and Burke (2009) there is an estimated 1.7 million homeless youth in the United States. These youth face risks such as family conflict, leaving foster care, running away or being thrown away, physical or sexual abuse, and coming out to parents as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning one's sexual identity (GLBTQ). In a sense the youth have gone through much more hate and ridicule in their early years then many of us face in a lifetime. In this study, Oliviera and Burke interviewed nineteen homeless adolescents in an 18-month period hoping to understand the culture of these persons.

When culture is thought about most may think of family heritage or even race. Culture goes beyond this though as a cultural group can also develop due to situations, lifestyles, and even hobbies. When an adolescent becomes homeless, not only do they have to deal with normal growing pains, they also are presented with a very unique situation- not having a home. This in itself creates a culture within their adolescent culture.

Oliveira and Burke (2009) explore the inner workings of the adolescents. The subjects tend to roam the streets at night so to avoid victimization and to find shelter. They work in fear and their biggest issue is survival. An actual count of these persons due to their transience, invisibility and often illegal status (runaways) make it hard to keep track of the numbers. Findings indicated that the culture they created was one full of freedom, unspoken rules, and little structure. Right and wrong thinking is not as prevalent because of the survival tactics. It was also found that social capital on the streets could be generated, but at the same time it becomes dangerous due to illegal activities such as dealings with drugs and sex.

Washington (2011) conducted a concept analysis with the purpose of studying the meaning of "Homeless Youth". The article notes that these are already known:

- Homelessness among youth is a growing problem in the United States and other countries.
- Homeless youth face problems of poor health, high-risk harmful sexual behaviors, drug abuse, violence, and victimization.
- There are conflicts in defining homeless youth, including origin, age, contributing factors, and predisposing behaviors.

Regardless of this, the study wants to adequately understand the culture of homeless adolescents. By utilizing different terminologies of homeless youth including homeless children, runaways, throwaways, this study investigated various literature sources to gain a sort of consensus and clarification of the term. Though the study does not come to a clarifying answer due to the lack of actual resources on homeless youth it did collect various important factoids about the subject matter.

Washington (2011) determined that homeless youth leave their homes for various reasons. These include substance abuse, physical abuse, and mental illness. It also found that homeless youth have high rates of sexually transmitted diseases, addiction, and crime. Nonetheless, there is little known about the population besides these negative stereotypes. Washington points out that the consequences that homeless youth face is their ability to navigate the "maze of homelessness". There are positive and negative outcomes that occur during their battle of homelessness. Going through this maze of questionable circumstances homeless youth gain the personal strength to adapt, become more resilient, gain survival skills and self-efficacy. On the other hand, they may have barriers to academic success, drug addiction, poor quality of life, and declining health. In a sense, Washington found it to be a journey fraught with difficulty, but one, depending on the person, which could bring strength and self-reliance.

Mallett, Rosenthal, and Keys (2005) studied homeless young person's use and abuse of alcohol and drugs. The general stereotype of homeless young persons is that they are a "bad bunch", one's that abuse substances and don't care about the law and rules. These researchers wanted to delve into this issue due to the chicken and the egg question: do adolescents take drugs because they have become homeless or have they become homeless due to the fact that

they were on drugs? They found that the answer could not be answered so simply due to its great complexity. Participants in the survey indicated that a variety of reasons lead to their usage of drugs. Some really did just start using drugs after becoming homeless. Some started using drugs because of family issues. Some left home due to familial drug use. The issue is so multifaceted and we can note that not all adolescents on the street are just bad kids. Situations and experiences can really affect choices and attitudes in life.

Hyde (2005) explores the question of why young adults become homeless. The author found that physical abuse and emotional neglect were two major factors but by implementing a qualitative study it was found that youth held personal agency over the stories of why they left. The project realized that answers were multifaceted and it was difficult to realize a singular majority factor on why they left "home". Many problems were mentioned to arise after the reconfiguring of their family makeup. Their homes were thought to have been reconfigured due to new additions to the family (re-marriage) or someone had left. Abuse occurred usually by a stepparent or a single parent and the brunt of the issues were due to a strained relationship with parents or partners. Other factors found were respect for personal style, religious beliefs, sexual orientation and educational performance. All in all this paper notes that so many issues can arise to cause homelessness- it can't fit in a typical box or single issue.

Woelfer and Hendry (2011) implemented a study in which homeless young people (aged 19 – 29) were interviewed in regards to personal digital artifacts. Participants were asked how they acquired digital artifacts and their disposition towards them (digital and non-digital). This included things like mobile phones, music players and wallets. In this research project, it was found that young people tend to part with these items to meet immediate needs, thereby creating and reciprocating good will in the community. Although this study cannot be thought

of as representative, in essence it reflects on particular stories of young people. Participants in this study were part of a study cohort that received iPods from a previous class. Students were asked about what happened to these devices, their Internet usage (or lack thereof), treatment from the community, and daily lives.

Saddichha et al. (2014) explore two major questions: What are the characteristics of homeless youth (demographics and mental/physical health) and what are the differences between homeless youth and adults? They found that this was an important subject to explore because there is a wealth of research on homeless adults, but not the more invisible youth. The study observed that homeless youth had lower rates of incarceration, used nearly the same amount of substances and that they were two times more likely to engage in unsafe sex. They had lower rates of sexually transmitted diseases and similar rates of tuberculosis, hepatitis, head injuries and HIV. Though quite similar in substance abuse, young adults were more prone to use alcohol and cannabis with lower numbers of crack cocaine. Other similarities between the two were rates in childhood trauma and adult abuse. They also had similar (and high) rates of depression, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress and psychical and psychiatric co-morbidity. The article brings to attention that though almost 20 years younger than their adult counterparts, homeless youth are already going through these negative issues. It further speculates that homeless youth rates of substance abuse, incarceration, and sexually transmitted diseases will only increase thus calling to question their futures.

In relation to negative stereotypes, research has shown that there is some truth to them. Fielding and Forchuck (2013) noted that there is a high rate of arrests among homeless youth. In their research they looked to understand what were the factors associated with these arrests and police involvement. Numerous factors were found, at the top of the list significant

association between drug-use and length of time being homeless. Other factors included: low economic status, lack of meaningful activity, depression, negative peer influence, and mental illness.

In addition to the homeless populations day-to-day issues we also note different levels of discrimination. Milburn et al. (2006) looked upon and examined discrimination experiences associated with exiting homelessness after 6 months. Though the study had difficulties answering this inquiry as whole, authors found information on the discrimination of GLBTQ homeless adolescents. They noted that there was increased discrimination within this sub-group of homeless by family, peers, and police. Their gender affiliation actually leads to more discrimination then race and ethnicity. This study shows inequalities within even our homeless youth construct.

Research on homeless youth outlines the negatives the population go through in their day-to-day lives. Many factors culminate to them being on the street without a permanent home, unfortunately during their most prominent growth years. Rather than only deal with growing pains, homeless youth learn to fend for themselves and go through hardships that their "more mature" adult counterparts also must face. Due to peer pressure, needs, and other reasons we find homeless youth turning to drugs, sex and even illegal activity. It's hard to judge in a life of hardship and even harder to understand what they are going through. A quote from a boy pseudo-named Marius in a study by Dolson (2015) sums this up in a different way. Rather than statistics we look at an immigrant child who in his time with Dolson tells his precarious story on the streets. He has now "aged-out" of his support shelter and frequents the public library. He says:

I'm eternal. Eternally walking the wastelands of the Abyss, a guardian, the joke. That's all my purpose in life has been, all it will be. I have no future, I don't care to work, to have a family; there's little I care about, and that's all that little I'm good at and good for. I'm the manicurist of karma's hands, and although I'll die on the inside so many bleak, and countless times before my carnal remains either turn acinder or join the blissful rot of the earth, I'll enjoy all I can enjoy, inside my one man parade of apocalyptic damnation. If I'm odd, there's odder people out there; if that's a good thing, I'll be silent. And if enjoying my space to myself is such a crime, take me away and call the firing squad, being alone is all I am, it's all that defines me, and I crave it like the roots of an ageless tree crave sustenance.

At Home on the Street: The Hidden Culture of Homelessness

Philipps (2012) claims that homelessness is a deviance from normal society, creating a new culture that has its own customs and norms. To become homeless an individual must adapt to these conditions and thus many persons who readily accept the culture are more likely to remain in a state of homelessness. The study claims that individuals who have traumatic childhoods are likely to adapt to homelessness more easily due to it being less frightening than the one their former circumstances. This being said entering the homelessness culture can be very difficult and an individual can feel culture shock and intense anxiety. Causes for this include mainstream society's perceived opinion, sense of security and loss of self. Due to this perceived rejection from an individual's past culture and society the homeless culture is of a close-knit nature. The population sees it as a refuge of past rejection.

Within homelessness there are also subcultures. One culture that can give a new perspective of the needs of the population is the materials culture of the homeless. In an

anthropological study implemented by Zimmerman and Welch (2011) they explored the items at known homeless sites (unsheltered population). From a societal perspective, the makeshift dwellings and plastic bags just look like trash, but to a homeless person this is property and a semi-permanent shelter. Researchers looked at 61 sites frequented by the homeless and recovered interesting evidence to help in giving the right types of aid for this population. For instance, canned food is not helpful without a can opener and much of it stayed unopened at the location. Donated hotel shampoos also stayed unopened due to the absence of running water.

Internet Around the World

Those of you reading this presently, most likely have had the chance to be on the Internet today, or even have your own Internet connection. Having access to the Internet is something that you may think most persons take for granted. The internet is thought to be one of the reasons why the world has become so much more global. Is this the case though? *Internet.org* by Facebook was created as an initiative to look into how many persons around the world do not have access to the Internet and what the leading reasons for this is. According to the State of Connectivity 2014 report it was found that only 37.9% of the global population actually use the Internet once a year. As the report says, "Internet access may feel ubiquitous, but for most people in the world, access is not the rule, it's the exception."

The report has found that the top 3 reasons for persons not to be online are Infrastructure, Affordability, and Relevance. These are defined as:

1. Infrastructure: People can't access the Internet because they don't live within range of sufficient physical infrastructure that would allow it.

2. Affordability: People cannot afford the cost of access.

3. Relevance: People aren't using the Internet because they're not aware of the Internet, there is insufficient content available in their primary language, or they can't read or understand content that is.

All three of these are interconnected in someone's non-usage. We've also seen a slowing rate of adoption of the Internet. In 2014, research shows only a 6.6% rate of adoption globally in comparison to a 12.4% rate in 2008. Within developing countries, it is even more significant with a rate showing a decrease from 22.8% to 8.7%.

In the last decade, we also see a change in how persons decide to adopt this sort of technology. Before mobile connectivity, most persons used fixed landlines through private or community based locations. We now see widespread relatively affordable mobile devices. In this timeframe, we now see that mobile device surpass the fixed line in adoption. Multiple reasons contribute to this - creation of the smartphone, multiple mobile apps, increase of network coverage, changing of social norms, etc.

This sense of mobile Internet is also explored in a study done by Napoli and Obar (2014). The authors look into the issue of accessing Internet through mobile devices versus traditional forms of access. They adopt a critical perspective in the sense that users who use mobile devices may not have the same range of opportunities as a traditional form. This article argues that mobile Internet access is inferior to traditional means for a number of reasons: content availability, platform and network openness, speed, memory, and interface functionality. It also believes that due to these inferiorities it affects user's abilities to information seek and create content as well as develop a range of digital skills. Though it presents this argument, we note

that mobile technologies are still being pushed towards underdeveloped communities, to give some access. It can be argued if this is a policy that can indeed help in fighting the digital divide.

Though the previous article talks about the negative impacts of mobile Internet, we still see Internet usage increasing in a study by Patrick Ford (2014). Ford talks about access to the Internet being a fundamental human right. It is noted that with 2.35 billion having access to the Internet the rate of usage in terms of social media and blogging have increased astronomically. Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have all seen dramatic increases since 2006 and this may be due to a variety of reasons: free usage, simplicity, freedom of domain, etc. These types of sites also allow for "Multiway" communication – a way for an individual to communicate with many people versus traditional two-way conversation.

Social media has also allowed for citizens to be freer in their views. For instance, citizens who live in places where public gatherings are prohibited now have a place where they can congregate without the scrutiny of the government and create reform – example Tunisia. This being said there are city-states that have developed protocols and procedures that have great control and censorship in their Internet society– for instance China.

Internet access and usage is still growing and is very much used in North America in which 84.4% of citizens have some sort of access. With this being said, do the homeless in the United States have access or do they encompass the 15.6% who still do not access? Let us continue on in our exploration.

How does the Digital Divide come into play?

In discussing the digital divide, we find that it is actually a very complicated matter. At first one may think of the divide as those who do not have ready access to Internet, broadband,

and cell phones. It is actually much more than this. Many other factors come to play and though this is very important, it can also be said that the divide is in the knowledge of how to utilize these things. Blau (2002) writes in his paper that it's not only about having access to a computer with Internet. The training portion is critical. Speaking anecdotally, I have found in my shelter work that homeless individuals have access to these technologies. They are given free phones (such as the Obama phone). They have ready access to computer lab space and even have been given tablet devices. It's what happens when they receive these devices that is the divide. Homeless individuals will more often than not come into the computer lab I volunteer at saying "I don't know how to use the computer." "I need help to type my resume." "I don't know how to check my email." This is not where it ends either. Some have cell phones, but don't know how to set up their voicemail. Many don't know how to text message and have to be shown how. The digital divide is one that is complicated due to not only having a problem with access, but also knowing how to utilize devices.

Hargittai (2003) looks at the digital divide becoming more of a digital inequality. With the spread of the Internet there has been an increase in the inequality of usage with those in advantageous positions acquiring better resources. The article states that mass media has reinforced knowledge gaps within the population and that experience with information technologies and more exposure to communication media trigger a more sophisticated usage of technology. Hargattai asks for a more refined understanding of the digital divide to be put in effect as there will be various dimensions and differences between the populations when access becomes universal.

Lee Rainie, Director of the Pew Research Center's Internet Project presented on a report that was implemented to see who has and doesn't have access to Internet, broadband,

and cell phones. The report entitled the State of Digital Divides presented November 5, 2013 noted that various facts were associated with the non-use of technology. Factors included age, household income, education level, community type, and disability. Persons were also interviewed on why they did not use the Internet. Summary of reasons were relevance (not interested, waste of time), usability (difficult/frustrating, too old, don't know how), cost (too expensive, no computer) and lack of availability/access.

In correlation to this report Lenhart (2003) also conducted a study where they looked at why persons opted out in its usage. Interestingly, 54% believed that the Internet is dangerous and 51% believed they are not missing anything. Other reasons for not acquiring digital networks were that they are is too expensive and that it would be too difficult to navigate.

Other studies on the digital divide look at age in regards to technology use. A study done by Volkom, Stapley, and Amaturo (2014) examined the perceptions of technology among 262 participants ranging in age from 18 -92 years old. The study aligns with other research in that older adults found cell phones and websites less user-friendly then the young adult and middle-aged adults. Older adults also reported less anxiety in relationship to having a missing device. Sex differences were also evaluated in this study. Though there was no real difference in daily technology use it was reported that women had more frustration with technology and different motivations for use.

This being said it can't be assumed that youth have an innate knowledge of technology. The understanding of technology by this younger populous in itself could just be due to the active interaction and utilization on a daily basis. Nonetheless even with training being key, it is very difficult to train without the device you must be trained on. In an article written by Alan

Crawford, director of information services at Action for Children he talks about how as a charity they transform the lives of vulnerable children and young people (Crawford, n.d). He describes experiences working with these young persons who are disconnected from your usual supports. Though it is assumed that young adults and children have the opportunity to learn how to use technology alongside their digital native peers, it is not the case. Just in the UK itself, Crawford notes that 11 million people struggle to get online. These persons tend to of course come from much poorer communities that are not made up of only the older population.

Lastly, Tagland (2001) talks of the pros of connection to information technologies. It is mentioned that many non-profit organizations in the United States utilize low-tech (voicemail) access to help with homelessness. In this way, persons have a place to receive messages and information on health care, food stamps, and various other appointments. Though this is not a training or advanced technology, it is another way to help an the homeless population in a cost efficient way.

The Homeless are Online!

Eyrich-Garg (2011) notes that the primary reason homeless individuals use computers is to maintain and increase their social connections. Homeless individuals were found to use social networking sites, chat rooms, email and dating sites to keep connected socially. These connections allow for certain social needs to be met creating at least one stable space in their lives. Rice et al. (2011) has also found that homeless young people use the Internet, mobile phones, and texting to stay connected to people from their "home". We find that information

communication technologies help in creating a "normal" social sphere allowing them to keep up with old peers as well as develop new relationships.

Edidin et al. (2010) found that the majority of homeless youth use the Internet. They have a motivation to keep connected, even when faced with a lack of resources, finding ways to access different forms of technologies. It was also noted by Eyrich-Garg (2011) that homeless individuals who did not already have a mobile phone strongly desired one. Just like it does in housed person's daily lives, homeless individuals found the presence of a mobile phone directly correlated with an increased sense of connectedness that resulted in a boost of self-esteem and mental health. Roberson and Nardi (2010) also observed that the use of technologies promoted social inclusion and survival therefore ownership of ICT devices becomes a must. It turns out that technologies are now being used to generate money thus being able to solve some of their physiological issues.

Rice, et al. (2011) determined that 62% of his studied population owned cellphones, 40% owned a working cellphone, 15% owned one without minutes and 7% shared a phone with a friend. According to the study only 22% had no cell phone access at all. Cell phones were used for a variety of connections. Many respondents claimed they used their cellphones several times a day contacting home-based family and friends. Some claimed to contact their case and social workers. This study just reiterates the fact that homeless do use cellphones and though the ownership percentile is less then housed adolescents, the number is high. The data does shows that cell phones are used for purposes relating to homelessness as well as just keeping connected.

Guadagno et al. (2013) speaks of homeless youth being on Facebook and having many similarities to college students. Assumptions that homeless youth are not connected are prevalent but as stated by the aforementioned research we can assume that because of cell phone usage and now social media, they are actually very much connected. The article reveals that undergraduate college students and homeless young adults have more in common than not. In both cases the idea of social network sites being nearly ubiquitous is a high proportion, with 96.7% of the undergraduates and 75% of homeless young adults subscribing to social network platforms. Though the majority of users used SNS to keep in touch with friends both groups had a percentage of people using social networking services for educational and career purposes- the homeless youth placing higher in this category. In this sense, the homeless may use social media for a broader array of usages than their counterparts.

Bender et al. (2014) did a study looking at what types of communication tools are best used in terms of the longitudinally communicating with homeless youth. In self-reporting preferences in the beginning of the project youth preferred email (40%), phone calls to their personal devices (21%), Facebook (20%), texting (12%), and messages at the shelter (7%) as the best modes of keeping in contact with project implementers. After a one-week time span the next step of the project was to give each participant a "project phone". This changed the makeup of communication with 53% now preferring personal phone calls, 17% wanting face to face meet ups and the rest of the 30% cumulating in Facebook, text and email. Interestingly with these project phones persons gave much more positive input making sure to note that they 'felt connected' to the world around them.

Along the lines of homeless having access to online information Muggleton et al. (2011) found in their interview study that being homeless had no negative affect on participant's access

to mainstream information. Homeless participants stressed that though in a transient situation that their hobbies and interests stayed the same and that it was important to keep aware of mainstream content. They utilize sources such as free and inexpensive newspapers, television and the Internet. This study felt that though there is usage of the technologies, that better access and even the facilitation of escapism of homelessness could be better addressed via the education of use and access of information sources through the Internet and books. It also notes that there should be greater collaborative effort within service agencies to provide adult literacy and ICT training sessions and programs.

McInnes et al. (2013) echoes previous research in their systematic review of literature in relationship to homeless persons access to information technologies. Their three major questions addressed access and use, purpose of utilizing the technologies, and the barriers experienced. It is important to note that though the study encompassed five databases spanning from health to social sciences only 16 studies were relevant in answering the major concepts – begging the question why isn't their more research addressing technology and homelessness? The research project again notes that the homeless are actually not cut off from communication channels and do have access to the Internet and mobile technologies. Within the study they found that mobile phone ownership ranged from 44 -62%, computer ownership ranged from 24 – 40%, computer access and use ranged from 47- 55% and internet use ranged from 19 – 84%. There was also a range of purposes for the usage of information technologies in particular all studies found that the technologies were used in communicating with family. Another interesting result was that many gained a sense of security and safety in owning a mobile. There is a belief that having a phone number and email address denotes a level of stability.

Other usages of the Internet included contact with physician and the obtaining of information on medical conditions (McInnes et al., 2013). Some used their phone and social networking to stay clean and sober. Others used it to acquire sexual partners and sex-related information. The study claims that there may be thought of creating a database where public information and counselors can be found online tailored to helping homeless with these problems.

Common barriers within the literature are not surprising. The prevalence of information technology denotes that Internet and mobile phones have become necessities rather than luxuries. Many of this population own mobile devices so the obstacles in attaining the technology are not as prevalent. Mobile device prices have gone down in recent years and there are more affordable and free programs out there for low-income populations. Many gain free computer access through libraries, shelters, veteran shelter, etc. Nonetheless, there is still limited availability of public computers and the cost and maintenance of technology can be high. It is also sometimes difficult to locate places to recharge devices and some may lack computer skills.

What Sort of Needs Does a Homeless Person Have?

People always have various concerns and needs in their day-to-day lives. Being homeless is no exception to this. What is interesting is how the homeless gain their information and how they go about solving these issues.

De Rosa et al. (1999) in a quantitative study wanted to explore service utilization within youth populations. Though this is an older study it is also important to note that times don't always change habits. This study looks more at physical needs of homeless youth and showcases

attitude. The most widely used of services at the time were drop in and youth shelters with a prevailing 78% utilizing these places. It is important to note the key terms youth and drop in. Drop in shelters are much more transient in nature begging the question of why youth utilize these locations more than specific centers. Less frequently used were medical care facilities, adult shelters, crisis hotlines, church services, employment service, substance abuse treatment, and dental. Woelfer et al. (2008) found that homeless youth primary concern is meeting basic needs – food, clothing, and shelter. It seems that these concerns can be acknowledged in a more youth oriented location where they need not stay.

Dang and Miller (2013) also did a study focusing on homeless youth in which they looked at three areas - participant background, how participants met natural mentors, and a comparison of mentoring relationships with other important relationships. This is important to note in this section as many homeless youth have a need for social support thus natural mentors become like a surrogate parent. They turn to these mentors for instrumental support (meals, shelter, etc.), emotional support, appraisal support (praise and encouragement), and informational support. For their information needs, homeless youth go to a close personal connection, someone they trust to advise and guide them to where and how to get the information they need. This is something to consider if solutions to information needs are developed in the future.

Dashora et al. (2012) looks at the needs of a specific homeless group – substance-abusing mothers. In this study mothers had an average of 3 children and were of the mean age of 29 years old. Their information needs included employment, education, and service and counseling/social connectedness. This population looked for information on childcare, job listings, tuition assistance/education waivers, and substance abuse counseling. What is important

to take away from this study is the interconnection of needs. If a mother is in need of a job and you provide her a listing this becomes obsolete if the bus line does not drop off near the establishment. You may give the mother vocational courses to take to help in her job search, but this is not useful if the class is held when she cannot find childcare.

Hersberger and De la Peña McCook (2005) talk of past work with homeless and their various information needs. The authors note that the homeless in their studies have asked for information on finances, childcare, housing, health and healthcare, employment, education, transportation, public assistance, and help with their relationships with others. Again, as Dashora et al. (2012) highlights these items become obsolete if information is not thought of as interconnected. They also talk of how provider's attitudes affect the population. Those providing information must remember that homeless persons go through experiences that one may not be able to fathom. They are intuitive and sensitive and are susceptible to feelings of unworthiness. If a provider is nice and helpful they are considered friends and the homeless person may come back to acquire help and information. Conversely, if the subject feels negatively in their interactions with a provider they may never come back.

Dang et al. (2012) goes with a solution-based approach to health needs in creating a web-based personal health information system for homeless youth. This was implemented due to youth having challenges in acquiring adequate access to health services. In creating "Healthshack" the study utilized Healthshack Health Ambassadors who were former or current homeless youth to market the product. The design allowed for the access to counselors, scheduling of health appointments, and the creation of a personal health profile promoting health education. The project was a positive one, researchers believing that findings show Healthshack can be implemented in other communities. They did note some issues in terms of

youth lacking knowledge in navigating health care systems. Youth also did not always have transportation to health sites and had no knowledge of health insurance.

This section notes that the homeless have many interconnected information needs. They acquire this information utilizing various portals be it personal connections, television, newspapers, and the Internet. It is also important to recognize that be it youth, mothers, or adults the homeless population as a whole have similar needs such as transportation, education, and employment.

Inspiration in Julie Hersberger

In doing this study I gained much of my inspiration from a study implemented by Julie Hersberger called *Are the Economically Poor Information Poor? Does the Digital Divide affect the Homeless and Access to Information?* This study explored the information seeking pursuits of homeless parents in shelters in Indianapolis (Indiana), Seattle (Washington), and Greensboro (North Carolina). She implemented twenty-five in-depth interviews with parents and they talked about everyday information needs, information-seeking, and information sources. The interviews were semi-structured which allowed for questions on daily activities, problems being addressed, and sources they consult on a daily basis.

Her study utilized a framework derived from Chatman's Theory of Information Poverty (1996). The theory is comprised of six major concepts:

1) People who are defined as information poor perceive themselves to be devoid of any sources that might help them.

2)   Information poverty is partially associated with class distinction. That is, the condition of information poverty is influenced by outsiders who withhold privileged access to information.

3)   Information poverty is determined by self-protective behaviors, which are used in response to social norms.

4)   Both secrecy and deception are self-protecting mechanisms due to a sense of mistrust regarding the interest or ability of others to provide useful information.

5)   A decision to risk exposure about our true feelings is often not taken due to a perception that negative consequences outweigh benefits.

6)   New knowledge will be selectively introduced into the information world of poor people. A condition that influences this process is the relevance of that information in response to everyday problems and concerns.

Utilizing these concepts the data was analyzed and provided a perception of everyday life and information seeking of homeless parents living in emergency shelters. In my talks with Professor Hersberger her perception in working with these communities is not that there is a lack of information, but rather too much of it. It was also found that parents did not usually opt for information in a digital form. Only six of the twenty-five interviewed did this and only three reported using the Internet two or more times a week. Nineteen reported that they did not know how to use a computer very well. Interviewees mentioned that their children were learning how to use computers at school and would assist their parents if need be.

Hersberger's work has become the influence of my study due to her closing thoughts. She talks of a future, where a more computer – literate age is present in the homeless community. This may lead to a higher demand for the access of digital technologies. Though Hersberger's subjects did not feel a need for technology, how will a new generation of homeless youth feel as they have most likely grown up surrounded by it?

CHAPTER 3
METHODS

Utilizing Grounded Theory

Vanderstoep and Johnston (2009) describe Glaser & Strauss's Grounded Theory as "a process of discovering a theory through data exploration and analysis". Though Hersberger's study had a theoretical basis, this project was implemented without concrete theories in hopes that the research would produce its own results. Though there is research done on the needs of homeless, it is not right to assume that it will be the same in a Hawai'i research project. Rather this project utilized a thematic analysis so to explore the similarities and differences between studies as well as come up with new ideas.

As the book states, some qualitative research projects are theory driven but in the process of organizing this project it was decided that we would go with a grounded theory approach. By doing this there was an emergence of theories or themes from the research transcriptions rather than to be guided by pre-existing ideals. The hope is that data from the qualitative interview structure will "speak to us" in the result of data analysis and in essence be organic of itself. By doing this sort of research we believe that the data will answer the who, what, where, when and why.

Getting to the Heart by Talking Story

Steele (2012) looks into Talk-story as a new research methodology in regards to her study on May Day celebrations in Hawai'i. Talk-story is thought of as a Creole English phrase meaning the casual exchange of narrative with a sense of mutuality that relates to creating relationships, storytelling, and learning tools. Though this type of communication is not unique

to Hawaiʻi according to Steele it has a unique presence and quality with the Hawaiian culture. In Hawaiʻi plantation times this was a way for people of different ethnic backgrounds and languages to connect and work together. It is important to note that similar approaches have been done in different cultures. For instance, a study Pe-Pua (1989) identified a research method indigenous to the Philippines called Pagtatanong-Tanong. The word meeting "asking questions" is characterized by 4 aspects:

1) It's participatory in nature. The informant has influence on the structure, style and timing of the discussion.
2) Both parties (researcher and informant) are equals.
3) The study is continually adaptive. The dynamic of the setting conforms to the group norms.
4) There is integration with other indigenous research methods.

The style of Pagtatanong-Tanong is free flowing and it is actually not recommended to have preset questions due to the population not being used to the format. It believes that utilizing an interview schedule may make the informant feel uncomfortable, even making him or her feel like a test subject. This style promotes comfortability and equality.

The reasoning for taking aspects of these approaches in this research study was to promote candidness with a population that does not trust easily. Similar to Steele who categorizes herself as a guest to Hawaiʻi state, I am an outsider to the homeless youth of Oʻahu and thus my intent was to collaboratively work with this population bringing out their voices and narrative to the issues they face every day. The study has a relaxed talk story feel where participants were able to tell their stories, their roadblocks, and the information they find most

useful. By utilizing the equality aspect of Pagtatanong-Tanong as well as keeping with group dynamic and norms the interview process became much more comfortable and casual.

The study was implemented utilizing a semi structured interview format characterized by Pole and Lampard (2002). The semi structured interview allowed for the flexibility of a talk-story interview style but kept conversations focused on the project's purpose. Utilizing an interview guide though not set in stone, kept the facilitator on task allowing for focus on key concepts of the study. Being semi-structured, the interview process was still flexible allowing for subjects to feel open and relaxed. As aforementioned subjects are extremely transient and can be unwilling to share to strangers. By being flexible, open-minded and encouraging respondents can converse without feeling constrained and can be more open and honest in their answers. As some of the questions were sensitive in nature (i.e. periods of homelessness, problems while being homeless, etc.) it was imperative to take time to get to know the subject first and hear their opinions.

Study Population and Conducting Interviews

The study population included homeless teenagers (13-18 years of age) on Oʻahu island. Respondents were recruited from the Institute of Human Services located in Dillingham area as well as the Youth Outreach (YO!) center in Waikiki. Direct communication with program facilitators were made for the safety of the young adults in this study. Participants were selected through purposive sampling as all participants had to identify as homeless and within the age requirement. All respondents identified themselves as living in either a shelter, transitional housing or in places not meant for human habitation. Many of the participants in the study mentioned having lived in all three situations. A total of 15 young adults were interviewed, 7

considered sheltered and 8 unsheltered. 8 of our participants are living with their families (i.e. parent, sibling) and 7 living singularly (i.e. unmarried without family).

All interviews were conducted in English (one-third of interview population spoke English as their second language) and were voice recorded. Interviewees were promised anonymity and gave their permission to tape record the interview. Participants were administered an oral consent form to further this anonymity. A total of eleven interviews with fifteen participants were conducted. Though the project was first construed as an individual interview process some participants felt more comfortable to be interviewed with a support. Allowances were made due to the population demographic. Interviews were conducted on the premises of the Institute of Human Services – Women and Family shelter and Youth Outreach Waikiki. Each interview took between 30 and 60 minutes and participants were give a $10 gift card of their choice (Starbucks, McDonalds, or Longs Drugs).

The Interview Process

Before the interview process began, existing literature on homelessness was studied and communication with past researchers was made. Similar studies were implemented by Dr. Julia Hersberger and Dr. Jill Woelfer thus their guidance was requested. Themes in relation to the research project were created and several questions were developed. Based on the questions and themes an interview guide was developed. The guide can be found in Appendix B.

To help in the fluidity of the interviews, the questions were separated into categories. The order in which the questions are in the interview guide however was not strictly followed. Again, the interview is based on a semi-structured format and thus the interviewer allowed participants to answer questions in their own way going with the flow of the conversation. At

points in time during the interview future topics were brought up earlier or later topics brought to the forefront earlier. It is also important to remember that though subjects are of a "homeless youth culture" they belong to other cultures as well. The researcher is also from a different culture thus when necessary clarifying questions were asked to make sure answers were understood.

As the project wanted frankness and openness it was the interviewers job to make the subject feel comfortable and safe. In facilitating a talk story style of speech with the assistance of the interview guide the project hopes to bring forth candid dialogue (Steele, 2012). Through the sharing of experiences, the presence of food, colloquial speech and a fundamental guide the interviewer was not only able to get to know the subjects and hear their opinions, but was able to get a look at everyday life. The participants felt free to express themselves and though maybe not completing trusting were able to speak about sensitive topics with a stranger.

The interview consisted of five parts. The first component of the interview included questions assessing demographics (Age, Residency, Level of Education, Number in Family, and Ethnicity), the owning of devices, and occurrences in relation to their current situation. Secondly, everyday problems were looked upon. Participants were asked to describe their normal day and the different situations and problems that occur since becoming homeless. Participants were also asked why particular problems were important to them and how they were problematic in their lives. The third component looked upon needs. They were asked what sort of things could help alleviate or help ease some of their aforementioned problems. They were asked what sort of information they needed on the day to day and how they would like to be provided this information. Information access was looked upon in regards to how participants ventured to get needed information and who were their information sources. They

were also asked why they chose that particular source. This section also delves into digital

usage and online resources. Lastly, participants were asked about their wishes and if they had

any ideas on solutions homelessness and other related problems.

Analysis

After conducting interviews, recordings were transcribed so to begin analysis. The

grounded theory approach was utilized on the data as described by Glaser and Strauss (1967)

and is simplified by Mcnabb (2008) in stages. They include:

Stage 1) Identify a topic of interest and select the grounded theory research approach.

Stage 2) Determine purpose(s) for the research

Stage 3) Select a group or sample to study

Stage 4) Collect data

Stage 5) Open (preliminary coding of data as it is collected)

Stage 6) Theoretical coding for theory development

Stage 7) Develop theory

After the transcription of interviews was completed, an open coding of sentences and

paragraphs was used to identify key concepts. These key concepts were then connected with

the different themes of the project. Broader categories are then created to highlight the

relationship between themes (Lee, 1999). The categories then help with the development of

theory.

The researcher begins this process by reading the transcript and notating all areas of

importance. These items are organized into the key concepts and then later put into a category.

A color scheme was created as to distinguish different categories. Statements were sometimes quoted but other times summarized into the researchers own words.

Once coding was completed collected data was interpreted and noted in Chapter 4. Though the semi-structured interview was in place to help guide conversations it is important to note that categories were combined and shifted during the process. For instance, though a focus on solutions was made at the start of this project, unfortunately not too much was found due to participant disinterest or priorities.

CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This section describes the characteristics of the respondents and presents and discusses the answers to the research questions.

Respondent Characteristics

The sample consists of 15 homeless young adults currently residing on the island of Oʻahu. Participants ages ranged from 13 to 18 years of age. The mean age was 16.5 years old and the median was 15.5 years old. Participants were almost split with 47% being female, 53% male. Unsheltered participants made up 53% of group consisting of those living in spaces not meant for habitation, abandoned homes, and couch surfing. The 47% sheltered participants primarily resided at the Institute of Human Services. Other locations included Next Step Shelter and a Transitional Living Program located in Ewa Beach, HI. Of the group 46% of the group are high school drop outs with two of these participants now pursuing a GED. 40% are current students but during the interview it was found that many of them have entertained thoughts of dropping out at both the middle and high school levels. One participant is currently on hiatus from school do to traveling back to his home country. Only one participant at the time of interviews successfully completed a high school education.

The population were given the opportunity to self-identify. 47% of the population identified themselves as Part-Hawaiian. 27% identified as Micronesian, 13% as Part-Samoan, 6.5% as Samoan, and 6.5% as Black. Of the group 73% identified as Hawaiʻi residents. 27% are parents to young children who reside with them both in sheltered and unsheltered locations.

Due to the purposive sampling technique utilized in this study it is important to note that the results from interviews conducted are not representative of all Hawaiʻi homeless

youths. Due to the transient nature of the population connections were made through a support giving facility. The lack of representation in this study is one of its limitations (see Chapter 6).

Finding the Interview Themes

Theme 1: No place to call "home"?

Throughout the interviews, it was apparent – though the interviewees were young they had a lack of home stability. Within just a couple years' youth mentioned living in more than five places across the island -even countries. Many were funneled in and out of transitional housing, shelters, and various public grounds. One of the main factors for movement was money. Youths cited parental figures losing employment or not making enough to continue to make payments for transitional housing and shelters.

> *We lived like on the streets, people's garages, to abandoned houses.*
>
> *Anything you could think of I slept on. Anything. Interviewee 3, Age 17*

Another major factor to the instability was home life. Youths who had various hardships, including child abuse, drug addiction, lack of guidance, and teen angst left homes to live a sort of vagabond lifestyle.

> *Brah you know what he tells me I can stay home but then he get all*
>
> *drunk he lick (hit) me cuz I neva went school. But he told me I could*
>
> *stay home and then he tells me he doesn't remember that and he still*
>
> *lick (hit) me. -Interviewee 9, Age 14*

Those of the sample coming internationally may have an even harder time distinguishing home. Some of these participants mention missing their home country but being unable to return home due to costs. Others have left "home" to come find family, seek medical attention, or to make a better life. Unfortunately, they find hardship in Hawai'i, sleeping in parks and under bridges struggling to learn a new language, catch up in school, and finding their place.

> *Uh huh, I remember in Chuuk the doctor told me if I don't go up here*
>
> *for surgery I won't be able to um make it like. – Interviewee 2, Age 16*

Theme 2: Ohana Means Family

Though there were respondents who had strained relationships with family 67% of the sample talked about living with family – if just the family they made for themselves. These families though living in various conditions rely on each other as a support system looking to each other for funding, child care, and companionship. Those respondents with affiliation to Kaka'ako park talk of a familial/community relationship in which they watch out for one another. This includes the looking out for their residences (especially during sweeps) and the sharing of resources.

> *Nah even though we're not blood related everyone just looks out for*
> *each other's stuff. – Interviewee 8, Age 18*

In addition, 27% of our respondents were identified as parents with children ranging from six days old to just making 2 years old. These new parents rely on their parents, aunts, uncles and other community members to help in their child rearing. Some used family disability checks to pay for formula, cousins and aunts are used as caretakers, and good Samaritans are sought for essentials. Interestingly, those interviewed did not want child care service for their

children. Postponing employment and schooling was cited to child rear and they would only leave children with those they "trust" i.e. those considered family.

> *The… when he was a new born we were living, well, when we came out of the hospital my uncle sent us to a hotel for two days cuz it was raining and they said it was going to be a huge storm. So he (uncle) kept us in the hotel for 2 days and then the next day he came and picked us up. He dropped us off at the park and the next day he (her son) was getting sick. That's one thing I don't like staying on the streets with him.* -Interviewee 5, Age 17

Theme 3: Anti-Authority

Though not blatant at first, throughout the interview the theme of anti-authority and a negative view on leadership became apparent. It's not surprising as homeless youth go through various ordeals many having negative experiences with those in leadership roles. Interviewees with experience staying in shelters or transitional housing talked about the ridiculous rules in staying there as well as a mismanagement of files. One interviewee even claims that a particular shelter "misplaced" his identification thus putting a strain on finding employment.

> *Well, I lost my Social (Social Security Card) at Next Step and then my girlfriend's mom got jacked (stolen from) with the bag that had my son's WIC (Women, Infant, and Children Food and Nutrition Service) and had my birth certificates. That was my last chance to get anything.* - Interviewee 8, Age 18

Interviewees talked about political powers especially in relationship to the "sweeps". As background "homeless sweeps" are police run removals of people from public areas. Some states have utilized this technique to move homeless from areas – especially sites populated by tourist. Hawai'i called these sweeps "compassionate disruptions" in which they hoped the

sweeps would lead homeless to find housing help. Unfortunately, though the intention may have

been positive the sweeps have become a burden to homeless who in actuality move their stuff

temporarily, but then return to their space after the sweeps have ended. Sweeps were thought

of negatively throughout the interviews some mentioning the loss of personal items,

inconveniences, and worry.

> *He lost his ID in the sweeps. And he lost all our important stuff. (On*
> *why her father is still unemployed.) Like they do it once a week.*
> *Sometimes twice. If they have enough money. I didn't even know that it*
> *cost money to do sweeps. Interviewee 1, Age 14*

Theme 4: School? Why….

As noted in the demographic section the educational spectrum of the youth is broad.

We have many who have dropped out of high school, most mentioning not going as early as

middle school. Others are currently in middle school and high school but are already

mentioning a lack of attendance. School for the most part was looked upon negatively and

unneeded. Within the group only one person had received a high school diploma. Two

respondents were on the verge of high school graduation and two more were looking to get a

General Education Diploma (GED). Those trying to acquire their GED mentioned taking much

longer then intended due to life circumstances such as housing and pregnancy.

For those still attending school and dropping out, school was marred with difficulty.

Classes were said to be hard, teachers not helpful or supportive, and programs such as

Advancement via Self Determination (AVID) and Early College programs were only for the

"smart kids". Education was not thought of as a solution to breaking the homelessness cycle, rather a negative time.

Some of the youth cited bullying as a major cause of their negative view of school. Many of the youth hide their homelessness from their peers so not to be judged. For instance, one respondent mentioned hiding from peers who used the public pool at Kaka'ako park. Another respondent talked about not wanting to go to school due to not having nice things and being judged. Another respondent brought a firearm to school after being hit in the head by a teacher. School unfortunately for the youth interviewed is not a safe place but rather another place where they can be ridiculed by peers and sometimes even adults.

> *Like how I'm on the street and stuff. And because of my color. And my ugliness. (On why she is teased at school) -Interviewee 2, Age 16*

Theme 5: My Personal Network

As alluded to previously this group has an incredible network they utilize for any need they might have. Need a babysitter? Let's see my aunt at Mayor Rites housing. Need help writing a resume? I can go to YO or IHS for guidance. How do I get to Wai'anae? I'll message my cousin on Facebook. This group is extremely social and though may be unable to trust easily have no problem in asking for help. In regards to property and family matters they keep things close to home. The younger of the youth who live with families tend to go to their parental figures for any of their needs. On the other hand, the majority of the youth (especially those living in unsheltered locations) seemed to have an expanded network.

The interview focused on the various problems and needs the youth had in their daily lives. In talking to them about their resources they talked about how it depended on the

situation, but they always figure it out. Respondents spoke of their own family networks, program staff (positive views especially for YO staff), religious entities, and work programs. They also mentioned that they had no problem in asking for help. If they didn't know a bus route they would just ask those waiting at the bus stop. If they wanted a particular pair of shoes they would just ask the person wearing them. If they need medicine they go to YO. The Youth mentioned sources coming to their various camps with money, supplies and prayers. With these networks, they understand where they can go to for their needs.

Though the respondents had experience and access to information communication devices (i.e. mobile phones, laptops, tablets) they tended to lean towards a more human network. Though they do use online search databases to garner information, trust was placed more on personal contacts. The youth liked the interpersonal connection and the fact that they could get an immediate response from a person rather than a computer.

> *I just like to um like I just feel more secure in their answer then online. I*
> *know that they will help me with it. If it's a question they can help.*
> *Online you won't get that. -Interviewee 3, Age 17*

Theme 6: Duh, we're wired!

Though respondents preferred a more human network they did have experience with technology. The group as a whole regularly use information communication technologies with many owning or co-owning mobile phones. Though the majority of the mobile phones did not belong to a paid network, youth utilized the devices to access Wi-Fi on a regular basis. Those who did not have access to a mobile device tended to opt for laptops at friends' houses, the Apple Store, and school computer labs. It is interesting to mention that the majority of

interviewees did not go to a public library for access. This may be due to distance to the library from homeless locations.

All respondents were familiar with social media most familiar with Facebook and Instagram. YouTube was also mentioned throughout the interviews. Interviewees used their devices for various things, mostly entertainment and communication purposes. Due to not having a paid phone plan youth used their social networking platforms to converse with family and friends. Social networks were also used to showcase talents, buy & sell, and to keep up to date with friends and family. Watching television shows and movies, playing games, and reading online was also mentioned.

Yeah I saw them (YouTube shows) because of him and now I'm like obsessed with it and he gets so irritated with me. Bravest Warriors is 2 seasons and it's really good and the other one Bee and Puppycat is only like 4 episodes. -Interviewee 11, Age 17

Nah I do I just ignore her and sit on the couch and just Facebook. She'll be in her room watching TV or she likes playing that Minecraft game. – Interviewee 2, Age 16

Connecting to the Research

The study focused on the following questions looking to understand homeless youth in connection to their needs, information sources, and use of information communication technologies. Below are some conclusions to the questions pulled from the study sample.

RQ1: What information needs are homeless youth pursuing in everyday life?

In analyzing the transcripts, we find that our population though small is diverse. We have students, parents, unemployed, night school participants resulting in a range of needs.

My dad is trying to get back on track, like where he left off, but it's hard for him to do that cuz every place, like his mailing address is like the caravan (Care-A-Van Clinic) um and that is far from where we live. And there is the ID office place, he has to get social security numbers and birth certificates just to get where we want. Interviewee 1, Age 14

This participant wished she could have access to her and her father's own personal information. Due to the continued sweeps of Kakaʻako her father lost all of their personal affects and is having a hard time attaining employment due to this obstacle. Unfortunately, this is one of the reasons they are unable to get off the streets.

Uhhh just the college stuff, my mother has been telling me so much to graduate and then go to college. Always telling me to go to college so I want to know more about college. Interviewee 6, Age 18

This interviewee though hoping to pursue a college education has her own set of obstacles. She is the primary caretaker of three young children – her sister having left them behind. She is still very curious about college and has been visiting her high school college center for more information.

I wish I knew about YOs. Because I was on my own for like awhile. Like YO was another part of my life. – Interviewee10, Age 18

In this response, the interviewee talks of how the information he needed in the beginning was where to go for help. He explained that if he had gotten more information about services earlier in his struggle, he would not have felt so alone and lost. He was eventually introduced to Youth Outreach by another homeless classmate and is extremely thankful to them. He talked of the many resources the organization has provided him including food, housing and education.

RQ2: Which information sources do homeless youth utilize in everyday life?

Homeless youths are resourceful and throughout the interview process we note that they are not shy it getting their answers. Again, interviewee answers differed possibly relating to access, but more so personal preference.

> *That's what people tell us to do. They say closed mouths don't get fed. -*
> *Interviewee 8, Age 18*

This interviewee was highlighting that his information source is the people around him. He highlights the importance of "socializing" in getting information. He believes that in being a better socializer it will improve his chances in acquiring employment. Essentially he is highlighting the concept of networking.

> *If it's like um like when I had my allergic reaction I was like what am I*
> *going to do with this so I just like kept it clean and stuff and was*
> *googling how to take care of it.- Interviewee 11, Age 17*

This participant focused on technology as well as common sense as a source. As quoted above when dealing with an ailment she used search databases to figure out how to deal with the situation. She also mentioned in the transcript that she uses the HEA app to acquire bus schedules and routes.

> *Yeah my mom first. And then go to the doctor.*
> *– Interviewee 12, Age 14*

This youth deals with a heart condition and does not always feel good. When asked about resources in regards to health the participant highlighted always speaking with his mother first and in worst circumstances visiting a doctor. In all problems, he references his mother.

Um if it's for jobs and stuff I usually look on Craigslist or I just walk around and like look at places that say apply. – Interviewee 11, Age 17

This interviewee highlights Craigslist as well as exploration as the specific source in acquiring employment. Note that respondents also cited mentors, various program staff, good Samaritans, and the public as providers of information and necessities.

RQ2A: To what extent does social media comprise information sources?

We post all kine (kind of) stuff.

We post beer.

Whatever we jack (steal) we post.

We even post our clothes.

- Interviewees 7, 8, 9, Ages 14, 18, and 18

This group is active on social media but just for the purposes of showcasing their daily findings as well as communication (direct messaging). They even went as far as to say that is overrated and they prefer to direct message (DM).

Mostly Facebook. I don't use it, I just mostly go on it to look at things. Like what people are selling and stuff. -Interviewee 4, Age 18

This participant utilized Facebook as mostly an information source for buying and selling. The interviewee focused on selling used things in the Honolulu area the interviewee would peruse for things she needed as well as wanted.

I try to post both sides of a debate just so people can see, I mean I'm not mutual I definitely have my opinions. – Interviewee 11, Age 17

This interviewee uses her Facebook primarily for communicating and research on political topics. At the time of this interview the 2016 primary election occurred and much focus was on Bernie Sanders and Hilary Clinton.

This participant would find posts relating to both sides of the political argument to inform her social media audience. Though she mentions she has her own opinion she stated that it was important to showcase both political opinions.

RQ3: Does a lack of Internet access result in homeless youth being "information poor" in terms of their everyday life information seeking?

The question looks at internet access and the lack there of being a cause in homeless youth not acquiring their information needs on a daily basis. Though it might be easy to assume that places such as parks and sidewalks would lack internet access this population has proven resilient when acquiring their Wi-Fi needs.

I started sleeping in the FedEx parking lot so you know if I wanted to
use internet I could get up and go into FedEx. – Interviewee 10, Age 18

This youth found that FedEx Waikiki is actually open all day and Wi-Fi is free on the premises. When needed, the youth would enter the building, relax and access what was needed on their network. Due to the subject's transient lifestyle most access was done in the late evening.

Various participants residing in Kaka'ako Waterfront Park also talked of a guest Wi-Fi network hosted by John A. Burns School of Medicine. The network can be reached in most of their tents and many enjoy utilizing Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube while winding down. Participants also cited Starbucks, McDonalds, and the Apple Store to acquire free Wi-Fi.

Again, this population is seemingly resilient and will do what they can to acquired needs and wants. Though interviewees did note that a lack of Wi-Fi led to boredom each mentioned their different ways of getting online. Majority of the time the group gave the impression that

they were indeed connected and were getting the types of information they needed. Some even mentioned that they would rather get an answer from a physical being as it's a two-way flow of communication.

RQ4: Do homeless youth perceive themselves to be "information poor" because they lack access to digital information?

> *Because that's like my entertainment. I would be more social but most*
> *of my friends have fixies (bike) and stuff so they ride off and yea.*
> *– Interviewee 1, 14*

Rather than feeling information poor this recipient highlighted that a connection to digital sources was priority due to it being entertainment. Similar responses of boredom due to a lack of Wi-Fi were mentioned throughout the population.

Many of the population did not feel that they lacked information. Rather that if they needed to know something they would just ask or would know who to go to for advice. One participant when asked if he ever feels that he lacks information for everyday things said "They hustle" (Interviewee 9, Age 18) to get their information and will do anything they need to get what they need at that moment (even if it means "jacking" a phone to call the hospital).

RQ4A: How do homeless youth access digital information? What sorts of devices are utilized?

The primary device utilized by this population are mobile phones most likely due to their portability and cost. 47% of our population owned their own mobile phone, one person saying they actually possessed two. 40% of our population share a phone with a family member or significant other. 13% of our population did not have apparent access to a mobile phone at the time of interview. One of the respondents without access to a mobile phone notes that it

had recently been stolen and upon acquiring cash he plans on purchasing the latest model of IPhone. The other respondent without a mobile phone accesses a friend's laptop daily being very familiar with social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube.

Of the mobile devices utilized 46% were on pre-paid monthly data plans. The rest of the mobile phone users (54%) only had devices with Wi-Fi capabilities. Though not on a network interviewees utilized Wi-Fi networks to continually access information needed. Participants who did not utilize devices regularly reported knowing how to use them. Only 20% of respondents talked about regularly using a computer with two-thirds only really utilizing them for educational purposes.

Similarities and Differences in Research

As in previous research done by Oliveira and Burke (2009) we note that Hawai'i youth go through similar circumstances such as child abuse, foster care, running away, being thrown away and other family conflict. Right and wrong thinking was also explored especially in regards to fulfilling needs. This group had no qualms in selling drugs, stealing, and participating in violent behavior if essential.

> *We sell drugs and stuff. Weed, Heroin, Molly, PCP. (Explaining how he pays for things) – Interviewee 3, Age 17*

We also see Philipps (2012) idea of homelessness being a culture in itself with its own customs and norms present. As mentioned before, the interviewees noted a community in which they network and rely on. There are cultural norms within that community and they have adapted to such things as regular sweeps, placement of goods, and access to resources. Persons interviewed on average had been homeless for more than 2 years, many starting as

pre-teens. Also, people in their network such as siblings, parental figures, friends and other extended family are currently homeless thus creating a sense of normalcy.

This project also continues to solidify the notion of homeless being online. Like Rice et al. (2011) we found that the majority of our population do have mobile phones though there was an emphasis of the use of Wi-Fi in our study instead of texting. As in Edidin et al. (2010) it was also found that the majority of youth use the internet. Our group comparably find ways to keep connected utilizing creative ways to keep devices charged and finding networks. As noted by Eyrich-Garg (2011), youth in our sample who did not have a mobile device wanted one. Some saved money or even stole devices. Others recently had devices stolen. Though attainment and loss of these devices are frequent they are still wanted as an asset.

In regards to needs De Rosa et al (1999) though an older study brings value in the concept of drop in and youth shelters. The majority of housing in Hawai'i is very much family and adult based with YO! being one of the only places dedicated to teens and young adults. Respondents all had positive views on YO! some wishing for more locations and others wanting housing availability for just teens. This article also mentions services such as medical care facilities, adult shelters, church services, and employment services. These services are also utilized by the youth in this study. Medical care facilities in partnership with Waikiki Health are brought to YO! and are utilized by many of the youth. Church services and parishioners are used for food, clothes, and other resources. Employment services are also interconnected with shelters and outreach programs. Woelfer et al. (2008) also goes over primary needs such as food, clothing and shelter. She mentions these things being acknowledged by a youth oriented location. Our youth use various sources but do utilize YO quite a bit being the "youth

oriented" location. Our Youths have dinner in this location, are able to repair clothing and bags as well as acquire donations. The only issue is shelter thus varying by individual.

Lastly as my inspiration comes from Julie Hersberger's work it is interesting to note the similarities and differences of the studies. As the study is done utilizing two very different populations there was no doubt to be differences. As she concluded, we also did not see a lack of information for this population. They have many sources, but unlike the adult counterparts in her study they did not feel as if it was too much. Also like the parents in her study our group did not opt for information in the digital form. They preferred human interaction from trusted persons and strangers. The difference lies in that our population can utilize technologies quite well. Our population regularly accessed the internet with many utilizing devices daily.

Hersberger was also absolutely right in her notion of the homeless community having a higher demand for digital technologies. This group definitely showcases this with their affinity for social media, networking, and need for Wi-Fi technology. Nonetheless, it's interesting to see that though technology is highly coveted that our youth still prefer personal networks and face to face interaction for information.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a summary of major findings from this study as well as limitations and contributions of this study. This section also discusses suggestions for future research concerning Homeless Youths.

Summary of Major Findings

The objective of this study was to gain a better understanding of Hawai'i homeless youths and their information needs. Overall, the respondents in this study reported access to information through various sources. Motivated to attain their needed information the population was aware of services, websites, and when need be were able to attain information from strangers. Many utilized a personal social network to gain information – family, friends, teachers, program staff, etc.

In regards to information needs it varied per the individual. For those who are new parents their information needs revolve around their children – where to attain formula, daily care, and diapers were needs mentioned. For homeless youth finishing their high school education, employment information as well as future schooling were current needs. Youths completing their GED were also looking at future employment as well as how to write a resume and other job hunting skills. On the other hand, our younger respondents focus was more on entertainment. Individuals mentioned wanting information on parties as well as drug related activities. Each respondent truly had individual needs, but all felt as if they had a true handle on attaining needed information.

In regards to internet access the majority were connected or at least knew where to go to become connected. The larger part of the group had access to mobile phones in which they utilized Wi-Fi networks to keep connected, look for information, and entertainment purposes. Most of the group were aware of networks close to their living areas and would utilize these technologies on a daily basis. A small part of the group also used computers citing schools as well as friends as their access points.

Again, the group did not identify as information poor. The group mentioned various resources to information including their social networks, websites, strangers, etc. When asked about certain problems they face in their daily lives, individuals mentioned places of information to solve their issues. Information on the other hand unfortunately cannot fix all of their problems. Many mentioned constant sweeps, shelter rules, and money as problems. For instance, participants mentioned losing important documents in the sweep. These documents are needed to attain permanent employment thus putting a hamper on finding a real home.

Contributions of the Study

Unfortunately, due to their transient nature as well as the safety of our homeless youth there is very little work pertaining to them in research. Research becomes even more limited when we explore homeless youths of Hawaiʻi. This study offers a baseline of data in which we can conclude that (1) there are indeed homeless youths that are connected (2) homeless youths are extremely inventive in acquiring needs (3) homeless youths have different sets of problems depending on the individual.

The IRB process also contributed to this study in its protection of our subjects. The attainment of IRB approval took close to a year, ensuring the anonymity of our youth as well as

the requirement of communication with homeless service providers. Connections had to be made at various homeless service institutions before contact with subjects could be made. Though this was a lengthy process it allowed for more partnership and understanding of the homeless community.

Limitations

There are a number of limitations in this study some in which concerns sampling.

Limitations in Sampling

First, the sample is not representative of homeless youths' in Hawai'i. As recruitment was done at locations of service many of our respondents understand their needs and have resources they are able to speak to on a daily basis. Through their locations they have access to program administrators, health care providers, housing opportunities, GED programs, etc. That being said quite a few respondents still live in unsheltered environments.

We must also note the limitation of the interviewer. As a stranger of the community the recruitment of youths had its challenges. To share stories to someone they don't know was quite difficult and thus gift cards were used for recruitment. Many days were utilized to go to the community to get to know possible respondents. Regardless of this effort it's important to note that the group is transient and connections made one day could be lost the next.

It's important to mention that location also could be an issue. By utilizing partners at the different homeless facilities many rules had to be followed. Hours of operations had to be adhered to and sometimes a private space was not available. This was important for the safety of our participants. Also, though subjects agreed to an oral consent without the need of parents

(many of our group were runaways) participants at the Institute of Human Services had to have parents give verbal allowance to program staff to participate in project.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study can provide a good basis for future studies on Hawai'i homeless youths and their connection to communication and technology. However, it is advisable for future studies to have a representative sample.

Also, though this interview tried to be casual for the subject more elaborate data could be conducted if the interviewer had more connection with the study participants. Utilizing field work techniques, like observation and social connection could deepen the interviews and most likely would come out with much more valid results.

Lastly, as this group is connected a more social media and social network focused study would be interesting especially in regards to creating future helpful technologies for the population.

APPENDIX A

CONSENT FORM

University of Hawai'i

Consent to Participate in Research

Street Needs: Are Homeless Teens Information Poor?

My name is Tamara Heck and I am a graduate student at the University of Hawaii (UH). As part of my degree program, I am conducting a research project. The purpose of my project is to understand homeless teens a little better, especially in relationship to information needs, information resources and information-seeking behaviors. I am asking you to participate in this project because you are 13 – 18 years of age and currently identify yourself as a homeless individual.

Project Description – Activities and Time Commitment: If you decide to take part in this project, you will be asked to complete a face to face interview. The interview will consist of questions about your current situation, your information wants and needs, what resources you go to receive this information and how you go about finding it. Completing the interview will take approximately 30 minutes. I expect around 15 people will take part in this project.

Benefits and Risks: There will be no direct benefit to you for taking part in this project. The findings from this project may help create a better understanding of the wishes and needs of young adult homeless individuals in their day to day lives.

The risks of completing the interview are being uncomfortable answering questions and sharing personal opinions. While completing the interview, you can tell the researcher that you feel uncomfortable and do not care to answer a particular question or may withdraw from the study.

Confidentiality and Privacy: Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published and databases in which results may be stored. This will be accomplished by assigning a numerical ID instead of your name to your interview data. Completed interview transcription will be kept in a locked file in the investigator's office for the duration of the study. Surveys may be audio recorded with digital equipment. Digital audio recordings will be used only for research purposes and will be destroyed on August 1, 2016. Furthermore, all personal information will be destroyed upon completion of the research project.

Voluntary Participation: You can freely choose to take part or to not take part in this survey. There will be no penalty or loss of benefits for either decision. If you do agree to participate, you can stop at any time.

Questions: If you have any questions about this study, please call or email me at (808)956-3360 & heckt@hawaii.edu. You may also contact my adviser, Dr. Wayne Buente, at (808)956-3360 & wbuente@hawaii.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the UH Human Studies Program at 808.956.5007 or uhirb@hawaii.edu.

Participating in the interview process will be considered your consent to participate in this study. Please keep a copy of this page for your reference.

APPENDIX B

STREET NEEDS INTERVIEW FORM

Street Needs Interview Form   Date: _____

First Name/Nickname: _____   Location: _____

Tell me about yourself.

Life Details	Yes	No	
Are you a HI Resident?	☐	☐	Born and Raised:
Are you going to school? Work?	☐	☐	Where:
Do you own any devices? (I.e. cell phone, iPod)	☐	☐	What type:

What things occurred that led to you being homeless?

Where are you staying? Who do you stay with?

When did you first become homeless? How long has it been?

EVERYDAY PROBLEMS

Can you describe some everyday situations or problems you have gone through since becoming homeless?

Why are these problems to you? Why are they important?

NEEDS

What sort of things could help alleviate or make your everyday problems easier?

What sort of information do you wish you had on the day to day?

How would you like this information provided to you?

INFORMATION ACCESS

When you have a problem or need something, how do you get your info?

Who/What are your sources?

What makes you go to this particular source?

Digital information: Do you access digital information regularly? For example, going on a computer

at the library or searching for things on your phone?

Do you use social media? What do you use it for?

Do you ever feel like you have a lack of access to the internet or technologies?   __ Yes   ___No

Why?

Do you ever feel like you are "information poor"?   ___Yes ____No

Why?

SOLUTIONS

What are things you wish you had to help in your day to day?

Have you thought of ideas that may help you and people in your situation? Possible suggestions to help with homelessness?

Questions, Comments

****

A	Bona fide Hawaii resident & US citizen or permanent resident
B	Age:
C	No. in Family: _____ Family Status
D	Representative of

African American	Hawaiian	Pacific Islander	Tongan
Cambodian	Hispanic (Puerto Rican)	Samoan	Vietnamese
Filipino	Laotian	Thai	Other: _____

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