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Funding Futures: Analyzing the Effectiveness of the American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth Fund

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Author

Lavitoria, Mikayla Aerial

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**Funding Futures: Analyzing the Effectiveness of the American Rescue
Plan - Homeless Children and Youth Fund**

Mikayla Aerial Lavitoria

UC Center Sacramento

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Professor Pellaton

It's no surprise that nearly every aspect of life has been altered by the COVID-19 pandemic and education is no exception. In the years during lockdown alone, students have reported falling behind in their classes, grades away from where they're expected to be. The isolation and lack of structure can cause any child to be susceptible to falling behind, but what happens when you add the fact that not only is your education unstable but you're living situation is too? Already faced with high numbers of absences, low graduation rates, and low test scores, before the pandemic, the 2020s continued to leave unhoused K-12 students vulnerable to poor educational outcomes. During the 2021-2022 school year, 1.2 million K-12 students were experiencing homelessness, a 10% jump from the previous year (SchoolHouse Connection). In that same year, it was reported that the rate of chronic absences for them also increased to 52%, a 22 percent difference between them and their housed peers (SchoolHouse Connection). Graduation rates also saw a dip, with unhoused high schoolers graduating at an 18% lower rate than those who had stable housing (SchoolHouse Connection).

With concerning numbers such as this, the research being conducted in this paper will look at one of many avenues that could offer a possible solution to this issue - funding. Broadly, my paper will focus on whether or not federal policies and funding can help address educational challenges unhoused¹ K-12 students face. Specifically, I ask the question of, "Do California counties see improvements in educational identification and retention among their unhoused student population when they utilize their allocated funds from the American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) fund?". As certain racial groups are overrepresented in the unhoused population, I thought it would also be important to add an additional subquestion

¹ The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children and youth as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence with examples being sharing housing with other persons due to loss of housing/economic hardship, motels, hotels, shelters, cars, parks, public or private places not designed for regular sleeping accommodations (California Department of Education).

that asks, “Do unhoused students of color see improvements in their enrollment and retention and are they comparable to their White peers as a result?”. To find out, I first sought to find a significant relationship between the spending of American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth funds from 17 California counties and K-12 enrollment rates and K-12 chronic absenteeism rates among unhoused students. Then I followed that by comparing the means of K-12 enrollment and absences for unhoused students of color to that of their White peers to find if one group had benefited more than the other during this fiscal period. Concluding my research, I found that ARP-HCY spending does affect these educational variables, but when broken down by racial groups, outcomes varied. As a result, my essay will be followed by what these findings could mean in terms of the effectiveness of federal spending as a whole and how we can better accommodate and improve the approaches we take to alleviate the struggles of homeless youth in California.

Background and Significance to California

The American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth fund was an \$800 million one-time fund allocated to state education agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) by the Department of Education to help unhoused students address challenges created by the pandemic (NCHE, 2023). To properly allocate them, the department decided that these funds would be dispersed into two separate funding sources, ARP-HCY I and ARP-HCY II (California Department of Education). The purpose of the ARP-HCY I fund was to provide immediate relief by being disbursed as soon as the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 was enacted. ARP-HCY II funds would come apportioned, with money being allocated in a total of 12 periods from 2021 - 2024. For both the ARP-HCY I and ARP-HCY II funds, states would be required to allocate at least 75% of their funds to LEAs via subgrants, with 25% of funds being reserved for state-level

activities such as training and technical assistance for SEAs and LEAs (NCHE, 2023).

Additional requirements included the spending of ARP-HCY II funds having to adhere to the 16 allowable authorized activities² described in the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act (California Department of Education).

During state disbursements, California received a total of \$98,757,695 to distribute among their counties (California Department of Education). ARP-HCY I funds were distributed by giving 121 LEAs who received an Education for Homeless Children and Youth Grant, the opportunity to apply for their funding (California Department of Education). As ARP-HCY II funding was being distributed, LEAs could receive them through a similar process of application and then collect their allotted amount through a formula³ created by the California Department of Education (California Department of Education). According to California's Department of Education's 2020-2021 Annual Report of ARP-HCY spending, \$1,651,489 were spent on services and other operating expenses, \$1,414,525 were used on books and supplies, and a total of 154,082 kids from Kindergarten through twelfth grades had been able to be served by the ARP-HCY (California Department of Education).

But what makes California's allocation so important to the unhoused population? To answer that, it is approximated that 181,399 Californians are unhoused, nearly 28% of the nation's total homeless population (Kendall, 2024). A staggering amount made more disturbing

² Providing wraparound services; purchasing needed supplies; providing transportation to enable children and youth to attend classes and participate fully in school activities; purchasing cell phones or other technological devices for unaccompanied youth to enable the youth to attend and fully participate in school activities; providing access to reliable, high-speed internet for students; paying for short-term, temporary housing (e.g., a few days in a motel) when such emergency housing is the only reasonable option for COVID-safe temporary housing and when necessary to enable the homeless child or youth to attend school and participate fully in school activities (including summer school); and providing store cards/prepaid debit cards to purchase materials necessary for students to participate in school activities (California Department of Education).

³ 50% in proportion to the amount that each LEA received under Title I, Part A for the most recent fiscal year and 50% in proportion to the number of homeless children and youth identified by each LEA relative to all LEAs in the state, using the greater of the number of homeless children and youth in either the 2018-19 or 2019-20 school year in each LEA (California Department of Education)

when it was reported that 4.1%, approximately 246,480 students are experiencing homelessness (Guinan and Lafortune, 2024). This shows that a severe amount of under-identification exists within our unhoused population. Along with under-identification, there is an overrepresentation of unhoused people of color. In the California school system alone, Native American and Black students are reported to have the highest rates of homelessness among their communities when compared to White and Asian students who tend to have the lowest (Guinan and Lafortune, 2024). To add on, after three years of decline in California's unhoused student population, 2022-2023 actually saw an increase in both the share and number of students experiencing it (Guinan and Lafortune, 2024). Formerly reported to be down 3.7%, the rate had gone up to 4.1% in 2022, indicating that the population had and has the potential to return to pre-pandemic rates or higher (Guinan and Lafortune, 2024). Underidentified and overrepresented, these issues continue to persist among unhoused youth as consequences of socioeconomic barriers that the pandemic has exacerbated.

Literature Review

The American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth fund is still relatively new, with states given the opportunity to spend the last of their allocation until January 2025. This means that it will be a long time until comprehensive research and articles can come out on the total effectiveness of this particular resource, however, that does not mean there is a deficit in articles and journals that study federal funding and what it can do for unhoused students. To find a possible answer to my research questions, I will be looking at the ARP-HCY's predecessor, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and how effective it has been since its enactment in 1987.

Approved during the Reagan administration, the act authorized the implementation of several programs and benefits to help unhoused people, children in particular (Biggar, 2001). Its main goal was to make sure enrollment was easier for unhoused students and ensure that they were getting the same education as their housed peers did (Biggar, 2001). In 1990, President Bush made amendments to this act, requiring states to review and revise all laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may prove to be barriers to homeless children (Biggar, 2001). From there, this officially shifted the act's focus from the enrollment of homeless students to the accessibility of services for homeless students once enrolled (Biggar, 2001).

What can be gathered is that overall the McKinney-Vento Act has been able to provide some relief for unhoused students. In Peter Michael Miller's examination of the act, it was generally agreed upon by homeless educators and advocates, that the McKinney-Vento Act had been an immensely beneficial asset for students and families (Miller, 2009). At the time of this article, school attendance rates for unhoused students had been up by 17% back in 2001. A cited report by the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and the National Law Center on Homelessness found that students saw an increase in the test scores of unhoused students in state testing, as well as reading and math scores. Providing fruitful educational outcomes, the act also ensured that many of the barriers that were preventing unhoused students from being enrolled, such as needing a permanent address to be filed, were removed to make it easier on families (Miller, 2009). Not only that, the McKinney-Vento Act also proved its effectiveness during times of immense national struggle. When Hurricane Katrina and Rita hit communities, many of its children had become benefactors, ensuring that while their lives were being rebuilt, education was one thing they didn't need to worry about (Miller, 2009).

With this information, it can be taken away that when provided governmental assistance, generally the unhoused population will see improvements in areas that were once lacking. I hope to use the information found here to inform my hypothesis for my first research question since it indicates strong positive effects for those who received the assistance provided through this act. Applying what was taken away from this journal, I hope to see similar improvements when similar measures such as attendance and enrollment are applied to the American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth fund.

With all these improvements, however, it would be naive to assume that it did not come with its shortcomings. Within that same journal article, Miller makes sure to express his concerns over the reach of its effectiveness. Often citing lack of funding and coordination as a major area of issue for the act. Within a particular section, Miller highlights the act's inability to adapt to inflections in state and district-level funding (Miller, 2009). This often leads to resources being severely underutilized such as transportation and supplies as a lot of schools cannot afford to upkeep them (Miller, 2009). Another major issue found with the act's effectiveness is that there was a lack of awareness that it even existed for families to use. In a study conducted by professors and psychologists from schools such as Loyola University of Chicago's School Psychology program and various city schools, they took it upon themselves to find factors contributing to why the McKinney Vento Act's reach may be limited. Their study consisted of participants in a large study comparing the experiences of parents of unhoused students and unaccompanied unhoused youths to assess how accessible the McKinney-Vento services had been (Ausikaitis et. al, 2014). What they found was that five major factors contributed to little effectiveness, which consisted of disclosure issues, lack of awareness, transportation issues, the impact of properly informed staff, negative effects provided by outside factors, and the

increasing rate of dropouts that are seen typically amongst unhoused students (Ausikaitis et. al, 2014). However, out of all of them, lack of awareness seemed to be the most common and biggest barrier families and students faced when it came to searching for proper resources to help them (Ausikaitis et. al, 2014).

The above study and article portion reveal that although it is effective for students who are served, there is still a large portion of the unhoused population that has not even seen or heard of the resources the McKinney-Vento Act can provide. What I can gather for my own research is that I can expect to find improvements in retainment but whether or not that funding will get to the majority of unhoused students may be debatable in my findings.

Another issue the McKinney-Vento Act failed to address was the overrepresentation of people of color who are experiencing homelessness. Although the act has done a good job addressing the homeless population as a whole, it only provides blanket approaches to policy implementation that do not dive into the experiences students of color face (Aviles de Bradley, 2014). This is particularly important, as people of color make up 62% of the homeless population (Julianelle and Foscarinis, 2003). When broken down, 43% of them are African Americans, 15% of them are Latinos, and 4% are Native Americans (Julianelle and Foscarinis, 2003). In a policy brief done by Anthony R. Carrasco, he and his team took a sample of 766 unhoused middle school students in the Midwest and disaggregated them by race and ethnicity to see how they would fare in standardized tests in English and mathematics (Carrasco, 2019). It was found that their odds increased if they were White, with them more likely to pass standardized English tests by 75% and standardized math tests by 70% (Carrasco, 2019). However, when tested among unhoused children of color with unhoused white students, it was assumed that they'd score comparably lower than their white peers, however, it was found that race did not play a factor in

that at all (Carrasco, 2019). In the end, it was concluded that being homeless seemed to be a bigger factor in a child's educational success than their race (Carrasco, 2019).

What I believe can be gathered from this study is that similar to my identification, I will not yield as fruitful of results when studying for race. However, I don't think this denotes its importance as students of color are still heavily affected by it. Within my study, I still believe it would be helpful to see if improvements can be seen with this new act and funding and see if race continues to be a lacking factor in a child's educational success.

As for suggestions on how to improve the homeless issue, it was seen that the McKinney Vento Act was one of many things that need to happen in order for a homeless child to be served to the best of their abilities. One suggestion that was proposed was that people look outside of the classroom and start coming up with ideas and implementations in which they can find ways to serve the whole family rather than the students (Julianelle and Foscarinis, 2003). Things such as stable housing, family structures, and routines tend to have a bigger positive impact on a student's life than simply being able to go to school (Julianelle and Foscarinis, 2003).

With my research, I hope that it can help inform whether or not federal policies and funding have become more effective since 1987. Although I expect to see similar results in its effectiveness and impact, I still hope that a look into the American-Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth fund will help inform future legislators and policymakers on how they can implement more effective ways to help students if there happens to be gaps with educational attainment, especially for students of color.

Theories, Hypotheses, and Causal Mechanisms

For my theory, I plan to form two hypotheses around the findings that were seen with the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the positive impacts it had on students who could

be properly identified. For my first hypothesis, I conceptually theorize that as the rate at which ARP-HCY funds are being spent increases, the rate of K-12 unhoused student enrollment will also increase. Operationally, when ARP-HCY funds are being spent at a rate of more than 50% of their thousands of dollars per county, they will see a significant increase in K-12 unhoused student enrollment. As for my second hypothesis, conceptually I believe that as the rate at which ARP-HCY funds are being spent increases, the rate of K-12 unhoused students being chronically absent will decrease. While operationally framing it as, “when ARP-HCY funds are being spent at a rate of 50% or more of their budget per county, they will see significant decreases in K-12 unhoused student chronic absenteeism.” I believe that these things will occur as schools will be able to afford more resources to identify unhoused students better and direct them to the proper resources needed.

To answer my subquestion, I will be forming my theory around the existing research found on unhoused students of color under the McKinney Vento Homeless Act and how they are often underserved by their SEAs and LEAs working for them. Conceptually, I predict that Black, Latino, and Native American students will continue experiencing lower rates of enrollment and attendance than that of their white peers. Operationally, I believe that as the rate of ARP-HCY spending increases, Black, Latino, and Native American students will continue to see lower rates of enrollment and higher rates of chronic absenteeism than their white peers. The causal mechanism behind this is based upon the belief that the American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth fund follows a similar frame model as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and seeing how no extra preventative measures were created to offset the shortcomings of the McKinney Act’s failure to properly serve students of color, I’d assume we’d see similar rates of underperformance for those students continue to persist.

Research Design and Methodology

To test my first two hypotheses, I looked at each county's spending of their allocated ARP-HCY funds over the course of three school years. In order to measure this, I calculated the amount of ARP-HCY funds that were allocated by the end of the 2022, 2023, and 2024⁴ school years and converted them into percentages. This operationalization was chosen as I am specifically looking at how fiscal support can help the education of unhoused children. By looking at how much was spent by the end of the school year, I can see if any spending progress had been made within each year and determine whether or not they had spent 50% or more of that by the end of 2024 to see if spending had truly been a factor in the changes made to enrollment and absences. As for how I obtained my data, I looked at spreadsheets provided by the California Department of Education, which detailed how much each California school had received from the allocations of the ARP-HCY I fund⁵ and the ARP-HCY II fund⁶.

For my third hypothesis, my independent variable was represented by different races: Black, Latino, Asian, Native American, and White K-12 students. I chose this operation as I thought it was important to display a diverse range of racial groups to show how each one would fare against their White peers. As well as how each racial group is impacted by each county's spending of ARP-HCY funds. To gather my data, I looked at information provided by the California Department of Education's DataQuest for all 17 of my counties.

Since I am looking at how the ARP-HCY fund affected identification and retention, I chose to use K-12 enrollment and K-12 chronic absences of unhoused children as my dependent variables to represent them respectively. To measure this, I collected data on the percentage rates

⁴ The 2nd, 6th, and 10th Apportionment periods found on ARP-HCY II 2021-22 Allocations spreadsheet

⁵ [APR-HCY Funding Results 2021-24 \(XLSX\)](#)

⁶ [Schedule of ARP-HCY II 2021-22 Allocations \(XLSX: Updated Dec-2024\)](#)

found among the overall homeless student population and the homeless student population broken down by each racial group. I chose this specifically to study whether or not the ARP-HCY fund can effectively provide identification and retention among the community they were meant to help. Enrollment was chosen to see if funding can provide SEAs/LEAs with enough resources to identify their students who were homeless and ensure they have access to an education. Chronic absences were chosen to then see if the funding could help retain those students and keep them in school. In order to find this out, I continued to use California's DataQuest for the same counties I had chosen for this project.

My control variables for this project are the "Under-18 population" for each county and the "homeless student population" for each county. I hope that by considering these variables, I accounted for possible data that may have skewed my results if they were to have been kept in. I first measured the population of people under 18 by taking data from the years 2018-2022 and finding the average to find a number. For the homeless population, I measured by taking data from the years 2021-2022 and 2022-2023. I chose these specific operationalizations as they would give me a good gauge of the student population during these times. To find this out, I sourced data collected from the National Institute on Minority Health and Disparities and the California Department of Education's DataQuest. In addition to that, I also controlled for racial groups, only picking counties that had data available for the groups I previously mentioned to make sure there were no gaps in data for each.

For my unit of analysis and design structure, I will be studying at the county level with multiple cases over time. As for specifics, I looked at 17 California counties⁷ from the

⁷ The counties chosen were Alameda, Butte, Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Monterey, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Bernadino, San Diego, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Clara, Stanislaus, and Tulare.

2021-2022, 2022-2023, and 2023-2024 school year. This specific time frame was chosen as it covers the majority of the years in which ARP-HCY funds were being allocated.

I conducted two types of tests for these hypotheses: Pearson's r-correlation and t-tests. Since my first two hypotheses deal with trying to find whether or not spending can make a difference between enrollment rates and absence rates, I will be conducting Pearson's r tests to see if there is a significant relationship between the spending and the two educational outcomes. In addition, I intended to utilize t-tests for my third hypothesis, pairing White students with each racial group mentioned in my independent variables, and comparing them to find if there are any differences between people of color and White students for my dependent variable. For further testing, I conducted additional Pearson's r-correlations tests between spending, enrollment, and absences for each racial group to see each group's own relationship with the independent and dependent variables.

Results

After conducting Pearson's r tests, I found that generally, the utilization of the ARP-HCY fund did yield positive effects on the educational outcomes of the overall unhoused student population.

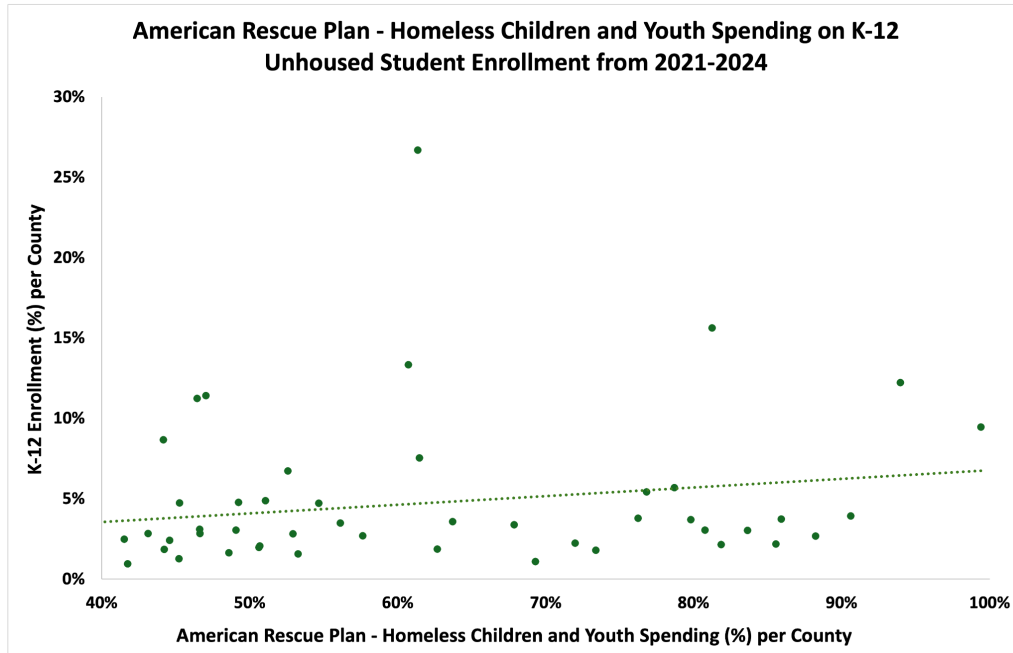


Figure 1: Data Source: California Department of Education

What Figure 1 displays is the accumulation of K-12 enrollment rates among the 17 counties in accordance with ARP-HCY spending by county from the years 2021 to 2024. This means that all data points from those years are what are graphed on this scatterplot. In terms of my first hypothesis, I found that the results indicated it was accepted. As displayed in Figure 1, there seemed to be improvements in enrollments once counties started spending beyond 50% of their allocation which resulted in an upward trend. Some counties even saw enrollment increase up to 10-15% over the years like San Luis Obispo and Monterey. This was further supported when I conducted the Pearson's r tests which showed that my independent and dependent variables received a correlation coefficient (r) of 0.20. This indicates that there is a positive correlation between ARP-HCY spending by county and K-12 enrollment among unhoused children. However, the relationship is very low or weak which may speak to how spending may not be directly correlated with how many unhoused students are being enrolled in their schools.

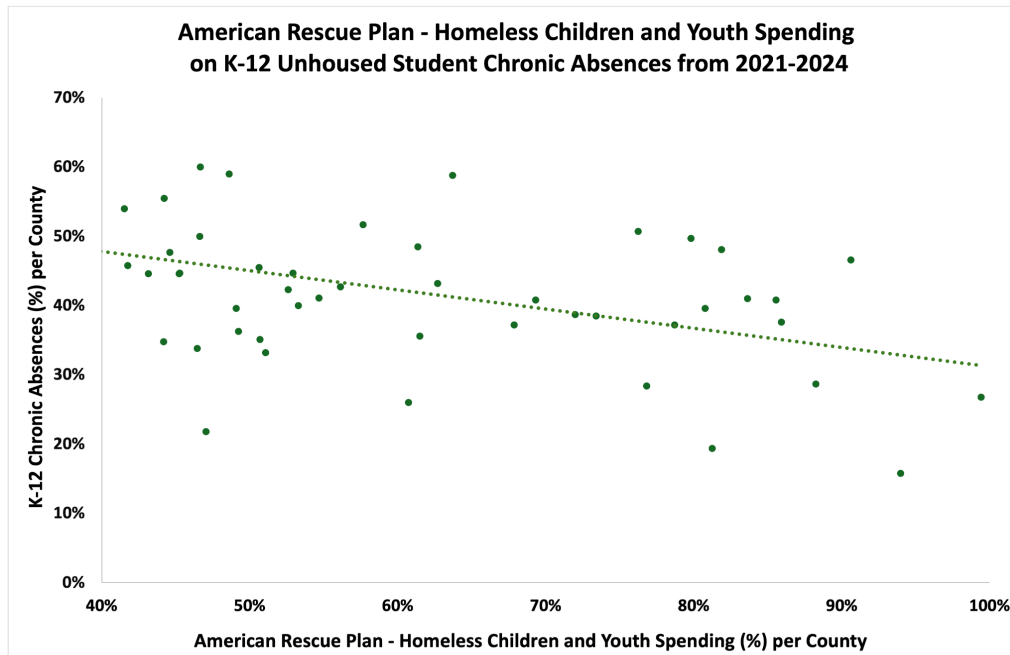


Figure 2: Data Source: California Department of Education

My second hypothesis seemed to result in a similar outcome, however, yielded much stronger support than what was found with my first. Similar to Figure 1, Figure 2 displays all data points from 2021 to 2024, except it's for the rate of K-12 chronic absences. What can be found is that once counties spent more than 50% of their allocated funds, the rate of chronic absences started to spread out more in a downward trend, with some even reaching rates as low as 26% like Santa Barbara and 19% with Monterey. When I conducted the Pearson's r test, it received a correlation coefficient (r) of -0.46, which indicates a moderate negative correlation between the two variables. This supports my hypothesis as it shows that as ARP-HCY fund spending increased, the rate of K-12 chronic absenteeism decreased. The coefficient being $r > 0.3$, also shows that there is enough of a relationship between the two to say that spending of this fund had a significant impact on how many students were attending schools.

As for what was found for my third hypothesis, results were varying from the t-tests which shows that my hypothesis was not supported in terms of how Black, Latino, and Native American students were served.

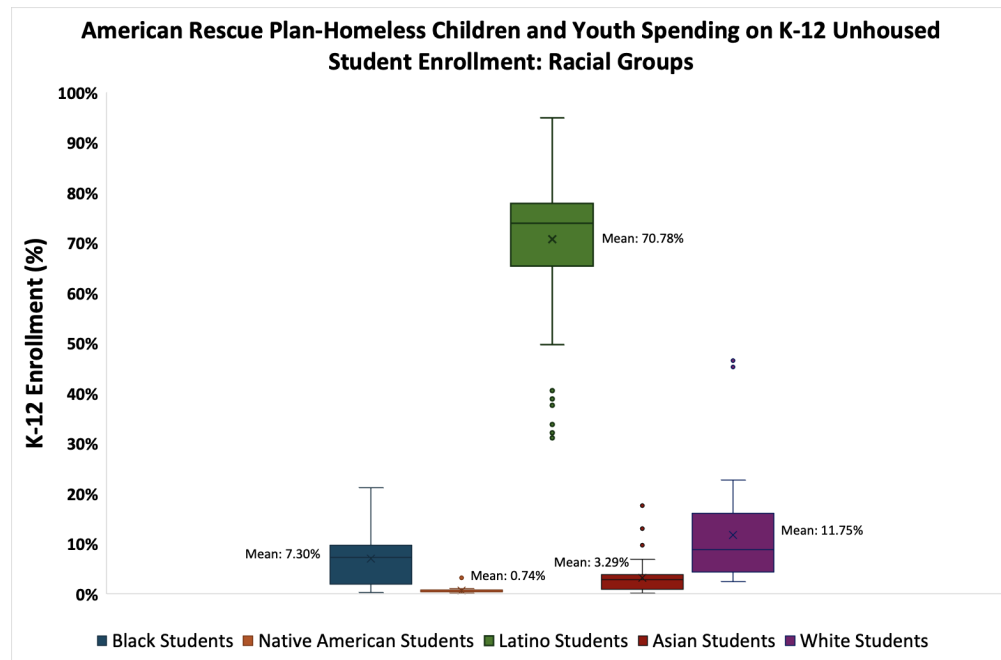


Figure 3: Data Source: California Department of Education

When conducting t-tests, White students were compared to different racial groups and it resulted in p-values that were less than 0.05, indicating that the results of the tests were statistically significant therefore we can reject the null hypothesis and say that there is a stark difference between the enrollment rates of White students and students of color. This is further aided when looking at how White students showed to have great variance compared to all students of color. For example, while White students had a variance of 0.11, Black students would have one of 0.07, Native Americans with 0.00, and Asians with 0.00, which shows how they significantly differ from each other. However, Latinos ended up having the highest rate of enrollment with a variance of 0.70.

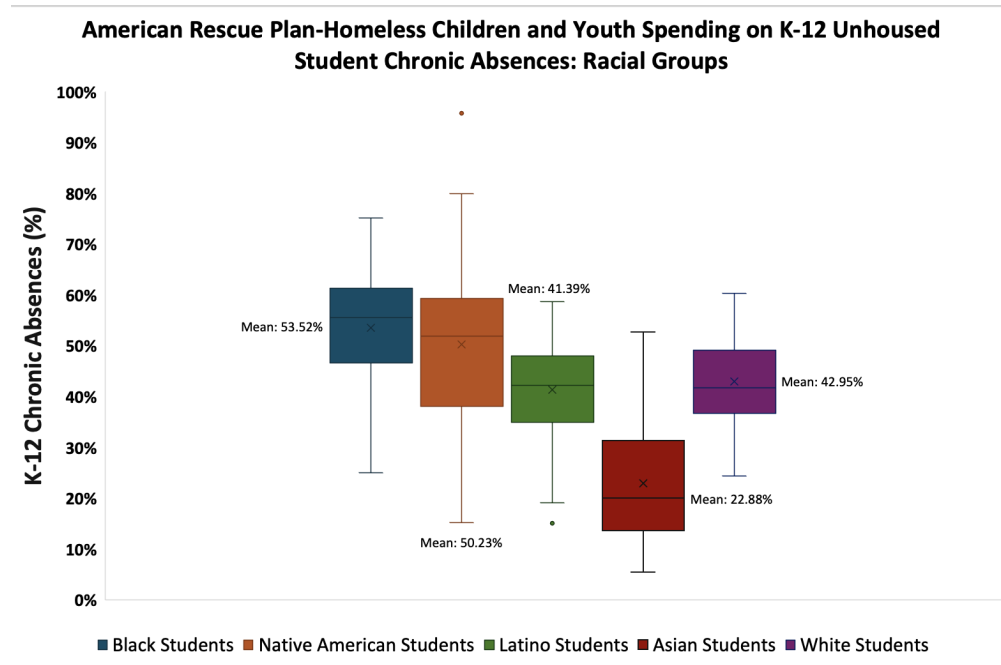


Figure 4: Data Source: California Department of Education

Similarly, when tested to see if there were differences between the means of White students and students of color for their rate of chronic absences, the results came out with p-values that were less than 0.05, indicating that they were statistically significant and we can say that there *is* a difference between White students and each racial group mentioned before. However, my third hypothesis continues to be rejected as Figure 4 makes clear that White students are the third highest racial group to experience high rates of chronic absenteeism. This is further proven when looking at how the variance for White students comes out to be 0.50 while Asian students have a variance of 0.22 and Latino students had one of 0.01.

Discussion and Implications

The main question discussed throughout my research was whether or not counties that utilized their ARP-HCY funds saw improvements in identifying and retaining their unhoused students with hypotheses that predicted an increase in K-12 enrollment and a decrease in K-12

chronic absences when those funds were utilized. After my tests, I found that both hypotheses were accepted.

Generally, ARP-HCY spending had a positive correlation with K-12 enrollment which indicated that as spending increased, so did enrollment rates among the unhoused student population. This may have been seen as a good sign if not for the fact that it yielded a weak positive correlation ($r=0.20$). A result that indicates additional funding provided by the government may not have been a strong factor in how unhoused students were enrolled. But since it is not 0, there is still a significant relationship that can be gained from it. In contrast, though, the relationship between ARP-HCY spending and K-12 chronic absenteeism had a much stronger relationship, having a moderate negative correlation ($r=-0.46$). So as ARP-HCY spending increased, it likely contributed to the decrease found in K-12 unhoused chronic absenteeism.

What I believe this means is that the ARP-HCY fund was good in being able to serve the students who have already been identified as homeless which resulted in them being connected to the resources and support necessary to ensure that they have the opportunity to attend school consistently. However, being able to identify new students, allowing them to enroll in school, and getting connected to those resources seems to be where the ARP-HCY is lacking. So although generally K-12 enrollment rates and attendance increased, when looked at closer, it's clear that there is still room for improvement in making sure that the American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth fund is as effective as possible.

As for my subquestion that asked whether or not students of color saw improvements in their identification and retention that were comparable to their White peers, I predicted that Black, Native American, and Latino students would continue to see lower rates. However, my

hypothesis was rejected as Latino students were found to have better results than their White counterparts.

For example, in enrollment, Latinos had a much higher mean than White students, seeing as the average for students enrolled was 70.8% as opposed to 11.75% for White students. Similar findings were seen with chronic absenteeism, with Latinos having an average be 41.38% as opposed to White students' 42.95%. However, these findings may have been skewed as 9⁸ out of the 17 counties chosen happened to have the largest Latino populations in California. To accommodate for this potential mismatch in data, I conducted additional Pearson's r tests to see if those results would be similar if they were solely tested on ARP-HCY spending and its relationship with enrollment and chronic absences by race. Testing for absences, each racial group saw decreases in that outcome, with Latinos having a stronger negative relationship than White students ($r = -0.49$ for Latinos and $r = -0.45$ for White students). When testing for enrollment, White students were one of only two racial groups to see a positive correlation ($r = 0.20$ and $r = 0.16$ for Native Americans). In contrast, Latinos received a negative relationship ($r = -0.13$) along with Black and Asian students. What this testing proved was that even though Latinos did have higher rates of enrollment and attendance, when broken down by the relationship between spending and outcomes, it's made clear that White students were the only racial group to see positive improvements in both enrollment and attendance. So although my third hypothesis was rejected, if we were to conduct more comprehensive tests that considered the population breakdown of racial groups, it would reveal that White students receive help at higher rates as there are fewer of them compared to the overrepresentation found among people

⁸ Los Angeles, San Diego, Orange, Riverside, San Bernadino, Santa Clara, Alameda, Sacramento, and Fresno were in the top 10 California counties to house the state's largest Latino communities (Naleo Educational Fund)

of color. With identification being a problem as indicated by the findings from my first two hypotheses, it would be no surprise if this is what occurred.

What these findings tell us is that although there have been improvements made in the years since the pandemic, the scope of how the American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth fund can help hasn't changed since the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act. What this research shows is that the ARP-HCY yielded similar results as its predecessor and is an indicator that there needs to be internal changes to how federal funding addresses the needs of unhoused students. For one, it's clear that there needs to be an emphasis on making sure all unhoused students are reached out to make sure they get these resources, with much-needed attention on students of color and finding ways to combat the large population and make certain that as many of them are helped.

Research Limitations and Extensions

Reflecting on my findings, I believe adding a new control variable that accounted for the population count of race would have shown much clearer results in the differences between White students and students of color. For example, instead of testing per county, maybe normalizing my data down to per 1000 students would have better framed large populations such as Latino students in accordance with smaller populations such as White and Asian students. In addition to that, if finding data for each racial group hadn't been a factor, I think it would've been beneficial to look at more counties. For instance, Contra Costa County also houses one of the largest unhoused student populations in California and one of the most diverse but it did not have data for Asian students. With the inclusion of this county and many more, I believe that the results for my first two hypotheses would have yielded much stronger relationships with additional information added.

As for research extensions, I think a good suggestion would be adding the 2024 - 2025 school year since ARP-HCY funds will cease functions in late January 2025. I believe with this additional year, we will see the full scope of the effectiveness of the American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth fund from when it was enacted and the school year following its end. In addition, I think it would make a more comprehensive report if we were able to compare California with another state. Possible avenues for this could be comparing it to a state with a similar budget such as Texas or with a state that spent less than California like Missouri. Here, we could see if states utilized their funds in a similar way as California did and find whether or not that resulted in the same educational numbers.

Conclusion

It is undoubtable that federal funding mitigates the issues affecting the education of unhoused youth but that does not mean that it is the solution. What was shown through the American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth fund was that there are gaps that continue to be left unaccounted for even after all these years since the first federal policy was put in place with the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act from 1987. If real change for the betterment of unhoused youth in California is desired, then we must start looking at tangible actions that not only make sure all unhoused youth are recognized but also tackle the larger issue of the overrepresentation of people of color found among the unhoused population. Change is possible and it's evident through the results of federal funding, however, we need to go beyond that and provide thorough and equitable support to our most vulnerable population, unhoused youth.

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⁹ Done for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years as well looking for data from all 17 counties

¹⁰ Done for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school years as well looking for data from all 17 counties