COUNTRY ROAD, TAKE ME HOME: A TRANSCENDENTAL PHENOMENOLOGICAL

STUDY OF PUBLIC SCHOOL PERSONNEL IN TWO RURAL CENTRAL VIRGINIA

SCHOOL DIVISIONS AND THEIR PERCEPTION OF HOMELESSNESS AND THE

MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT.

by

Cora Peterson Tolliver

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

Liberty University

2018

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Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how school

personnel in two rural Virginia school districts perceive the phenomenon of homelessness and

the McKinney-Vento Act for Homeless Education. Participants in this study were10 school

employees from two school districts located in the rural Central Virginia counties of

Framingham and Marlborough, and included teachers, reading specialists, school administrators,

registrars, counselors, and homeless liaisons. The theoretical framework guiding this study was

Burns's (1978) theory of transformational leadership, which holds that, with the proper

leadership, stakeholders, such as teachers, can be connected more to the project at hand and to

the identity of the organization. Recent trends are leaning towards administrators placing

teachers in leadership roles (Cosenza, 2015), in hopes they can become transformational leaders

by connecting their peers to important information that can help students socially, personally,

and academically. The central research question of the study was: How do school personnel in

two rural Virginia school districts describe homelessness? Two sub-questions helped guide the

study. The first sub-question was: How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts

describe their experience with homeless students? The second sub-question was: How do school

personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe their understanding of the McKinney-

Vento Act"? Data collection methods included journaling, document analysis, and personal

interviews. Moustakas's (1994) method of analysis was used to interpret collected data.

Keywords: Homelessness, students, McKinney-Vento Act, rural education, school

personnel, school administrators, housing, disadvantaged, transformational leadership.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Dr. Joan Fitzpatrick, affectionately known as "Dr. Joan." Dr. Joan prayed with us, for us, and never e-mailed us without eloquently giving us a much-needed blessing first by saying "Bless the Lord's Day!" as a greeting. She loved encouraging us with the words of Paul and how he handled "the race." She was so much more than a chairperson. My prayer is that every candidate can have a "Dr. Joan" to share the Word of the Lord with them and who also is a master at MS Word! Note: This was originally written the same way, in the "Acknowledgements" section of this paper two years before Dr. Joan passed away unexpectedly in November, 2017. Because of Dr. Joan, I was blessed with the most supportive classmates—6 ladies we call the "LU Sisterhood"—Mildred, Monica, Lorna, Lauren, Bonnie, all working toward a common goal of the Ed.D. with Dr. Joan as our chairperson. Somehow she managed to conference with all of us individually, as if we were the only candidate she chaired. When we lost Dr. Joan, we mourned as if we lost a family member. She lived to call one of us "Dr."—Dr. Mildred Norris. The rest of us were left with a fierce desire to finish the race in her memory with the assistance of our new chairpersons, to whom we are grateful. We are crossing the finish line, one by one!

> I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. 2 Timothy 4:7-8 King James Version (KJV)

Acknowledgments

First, I thank God for this journey. Second, my daughter, Stanessa Harris, was nine years old when I began my graduate studies. I appreciate the patience she displayed, when she wanted my attention. She is now a young woman with dreams and educational goals of her own. I pray she will persevere toward greatness. It is humorous that this pursuit has taken so long to achieve that she has finished high school, college, and was recently married to become "Nessa Harris Purnell." Yes, it is amusing, or maybe it is just amazing that I persevered that long! Next, my mother, Gladys Lewis Dean, has been one of my greatest supporters during my education. She always thought I was smarter than I ever believed. I felt comfort in knowing that she was partnering with me to ensure that my daughter was well taken-care-of while I was studying or in class. I never could have made it without her.

David Tolliver, my husband and best friend, came into my life when I needed him. He was the person who kept me on task by turning off the television. Just when I thought he was not paying attention, he would always remember to ask about my grades. It meant the world to know my dream was important to him.

I remember dancing when Dr. Patricia Popp, Virginia State Director of Homeless Education agreed to be on my committee. I was also delighted to have Dr. McClendon as a committee member and grateful when she became my chairperson. I have had angels along this journey including Dr. Lucinda Spaulding, who stood in the gap when I did not have a chairperson, and my research consultant, Dr. Frederick Milacci.

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List of Abbreviations

Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

Child Protective Services (CPS)

Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESSA)

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Grade Point Averages (GPAs)

Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)

McKinney-Vento Act (MVA)

McKinney-Vento Act Implementation Scale (MVAIS)

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)

National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)

National Law Center for Homelessness and Poverty (NLCHP)

No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)

United States Department of Health and Human Services (HHS)

Virginia Department of Education (VDOE)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

In 1987, the McKinney-Vento Act (MVA) for Homeless Education was created. The act is a mandate to protect the rights of homeless children and their families. Because of the transient nature of homeless families, parents and guardians are often without the required paperwork to enroll their children in school. They also need school supplies and other items that are considered necessary for a child's successful academic progress (Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). Families often do not know about the legal options that are available to them through the MVA. More students encountering homelessness may be recognized if school personnel are more familiar with MVA (Peterson Harris, 2011).

In this chapter, information is given related to the background of the MVA and how it has evolved since 1987. There have been additional reauthorizations of the law to more clearly define the roles and responsibilities of those involved in its daily implementation, for the benefit of American families experiencing homelessness. This research was designed to address a problem that was introduced in this chapter, along with the Central research question and two guiding sub-questions. The results of this study could have a significant impact on the families experiencing housing challenges, as well as on school personnel who serve them. The purpose of the study is explored and the significance of the study reviewed in this chapter. To aid in the review of this study, the most commonly used terminology related to homeless education will be defined for the reader. The theological, social, theoretical, and legislative context of homelessness and homeless education are addressed. The emotional, mental, and academic effects homelessness has on youth in rural America are addressed, related to the social context. Statistics are provided to support the statements. The theory of transformational leadership is

introduced in this chapter to build a foundation on which this study was built, creating a theoretical framework.

Background

Homelessness is not a new phenomenon. Although homelessness in the United States can be traced back to 1640 in Colonial times, (Kusmer, 2002 as cited in University of Washington, 2012) it became a major social and health issue in the 1980s (Grant, Gracy, Goldsmith, Shapiro, & Redlener, 2013). In early America, homeless individuals were referred to as "vagrants" and pursued by the police (University of Washington, 2012). Rahman, Turner, and Elbedour (2015) asserted that historical disasters such as the Great Chicago Fire (1871), the San Francisco earthquake (1906), and a flood in Mississippi in 1927 that left 1.3 million individuals displaced, heavily contributed to the increase in homelessness. Homelessness had been thought to be a temporary situation in all of these events (Rahman et al., 2015).

Social Context of Homelessness

Homelessness has been considered a major social and public health concern since the 1980s (Grant et al., 2013). Grant et al. (2013) noted that many of the available government reports, articles, and news stories related to family homelessness were written in the 1980s and 1990s. They also concluded that despite the time which had passed, the descriptions of homelessness and public policies were still relevant. However, they found that the homeless family population has become more evident among low-income and poor families over the years. "Simultaneously, with the rise of family homelessness was an increase in the number of homeless or street-involved youths who lived unattached from their families or guardians" (Grant et al., 2013, p. 2).

According to Grant et al. (2013), homelessness also has a negative impact on the health

and well-being of children. "In studies done in Los Angeles shelters, 78% of school-age homeless children had a psychiatric, behavioral or academic problem" (Grant et al., p. 4). In another article, Kidd (2012) suggested that "health trajectories of most homeless youth are poor and mortality rates are strikingly higher than those of housed youth" (p.533).

Theoretical Context on Homelessness

This writer believes that Burns's (1978) theory of transformational leadership was the most appropriate upon which to base this study. Based on this theory, leadership roles in the public school setting should not only be viewed as belonging to the administration. Transformational leadership is not about power. Rather, it is about leaders' abilities to observe their personnel, or in this case, possibly their own peers, and be able to discern where deficits lie, in order to bring everyone together for a common cause.

Transformational leaders recognize that leadership is more than merely manipulating others and are able to set themselves apart from those who solely aspire to have power (Burns, 1978). School personnel, such as classroom teachers, should be seen as leaders to their peers and their students. In this capacity, they can serve as transformational leaders even more than administrators and become agents of change. Recent trends are even leaning toward administrators placing teachers in leadership roles (Cosenza, 2015) in hopes that they can become transformational leaders by connecting their peers to important information that can help students socially, personally, and academically. For example, since they are in the classroom working directly with students, they are able to observe students and can influence their peers to identify homeless students. Therefore, more students could benefit from the McKinney-Vento Act if school personnel were informed. With the development of teacher leadership related to this research, teachers could possibly assist the homeless education liaison in disseminating

information to faculty and staff related to homeless education.

Anderson (2008) conducted a study in a rural area that was worth noting on transformational teacher leadership and how it is received in rural schools. The article, although dated, was a rare find on research of teachers and transformational leadership and the only of its kind found during this research, conducted in a rural area. Anderson asserted, "If researchers focus on teachers as leaders in rural schools, specifically those who operate outside of traditional leadership roles, there exists a promising area of new understanding for educational leadership as transformational teacher leadership" (p.10). Anderson's (2008) study affirmed the Cosenza (2015), who discussed the possibility of imploring teachers as transformational leaders. This seem especially enticing in small, rural schools, when staffing is low and budgets for additional administrators are often strained.

Legislative History

Today, every school district in America is required to have a specific person responsible for supporting the education of students experiencing homelessness and ensuring that they know how the school district may assist them (The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2015). The person, who is referred to as the local educational agency liaison, or homeless liaison, is also the person who is primarily responsible for educating other personnel within the school system about the legal definition of homelessness and how to properly identify students. If more students facing housing challenges are identified, many of the barriers to receiving their education and potentially their high school graduation is removed (Peterson Harris, 2011).

The two major definitions of homelessness in use by federal agencies are the education definition in the McKinney-Vento Act (The McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.1987, 2015), and the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition (United States

Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD], 2009). After the initial enactment in 1987, the McKinney-Vento Act was later reauthorized in 2001 as part of the No Child Left Behind Act and became effective in 2002. The act was most recently reauthorized in December, 2015 as the Every Student Succeeds Act or ESSA (The McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.1987, 2015).

The McKinney-Vento Act was named after two men who were instrumental advocates in the fight for a fair and equitable education for homeless children (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty [NLCHP], 2009). Homeless youth are those who "lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" (The McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.1987, 2015). Congressmen, McKinney and Vento were the influential voices who placed focus on the need for enhanced laws for homeless families, as well as other broader social causes. McKinney and Vento were not the only advocates in the fight for justice in the homeless arena. Foscarinas was a woman who worked with a group of advocates and other influential individuals in Washington, D.C. Because of their efforts, the Homeless Person's Survival Act was introduced to Congress in 1986, (NLCHP, 2009).

A gap exists in the literature on this subject. Although studies have been conducted in urban areas and other parts of the country with school social workers as participants, no known studies have been conducted with teachers, administrators, and support staff in a rural setting. Grothaus, Lorelle, Anderson, and Knight (2011) wrote, "A fuller understanding of the experiences of the homeless and formerly homeless children and their families may enable others to become more responsive to the children's academic needs" (p.192).

Situation to Self

My motivation for conducting this study was both personal and educational. I brought

ontological assumptions to the study. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative researchers employing ontological assumptions "conduct a study with the intent of reporting multiple realities" (p.18). I had an assumption that homelessness only affected specific groups of people, and had a misunderstanding of what it actually meant to be homeless. There was a time in my life when I learned that my young daughter and I were legally defined as homeless. The irony was that I learned this from Dr. Patricia Popp, Virginia State Director of Homeless Education, as I attended a training session as an educator and homeless liaison for the school district in which I was employed. I was previously employed by a school division in Region Eight. However, I will not study the school division in which I was employed. My daughter had never been identified as homeless by her school district. I was eager to understand if she had not been identified due to a lack of understanding of homelessness on the part of school personnel. My reality of homelessness came, in part, from being reared in rural Virginia and a lack of exposure and education on the issue. Therefore, as a researcher, it was my responsibility to gather information related to the multiple realities of the participants in my research. I was previously employed by a school division in Region Eight. However, I will not study the school division in which I was employed

In this research, I was seeking to understand school personnel and the world in which they live and work, as it relates to their perception of homeless education and MVA. Therefore, the paradigm or worldview associated with this research was social constructivism (Creswell, 2013). The social constructivism paradigm called for me to seek the complex nature subjective nature of the participants' views rather than grasping the simplest interpretation of their journal for writings and individual interviews (Creswell, 2013). In future research, the paradigm may be more of an advocacy or participatory nature. In this worldview, I would focus on creating an

action plan for reform or increased professional development for teachers as it relates to

homeless education. This would be based on the results of the current research if it is proven to

be needed.

Problem Statement

The problem is that school administrators responsible for professional development do

not know how school personnel in rural Virginia school districts perceive homelessness and the

McKinney-Vento Act. It is important to understand what all school personnel know about

homelessness as a baseline for future professional development to adequately assist homeless

youth in their schools (Fabian, 2013). Canfield, Teasley, Abell, and Randolph (2012) found that

there were studies conducted in urban areas and other areas of the country with school social

workers, but research had not been completed which looks at the perceptions of teachers and

administrators in a rural setting. The population sample of this study included 10 school

personnel from two rural school districts within the Commonwealth of Virginia's Region Eight

and Region Five.

Jackson and Shannon (2014) examined the factors associated with social support in a

rural, homeless population. Their study took place, researching citizens of the rural areas of the

Commonwealth of Kentucky. Therefore, there was still a gap in the literature related to the

perception of homelessness and the MVA for school personnel in rural Virginia. Schneider

(2014) conducted a study with random focus groups in which he concluded that most of the

public's views on homelessness stem from what they learn from media sources. Each school

district in the United States is required to have a person assigned as responsible for the

facilitation and implementation of the MVA within the school district (The McKinney-Vento

Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.1987, 2015). No voice has been given to the school personnel of

rural Virginia school districts to determine their perception of homelessness and the MVA.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts perceive the phenomenon of homelessness and the MVA. Learning the commonalities and differences among how these individuals describe their experiences with students experiencing homelessness and their understanding of the MVA was the basis of this phenomenological study. In this research, school personnel included teachers, school administrators, reading specialists, counselors registrars, and homeless liaisons. Students experiencing homelessness were generally defined as individuals who "lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" (Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, p. 323).

The theory guiding this study is Burns's theory of transformational leadership. Within this theory, Burns (1978) held the principle that stakeholders, such as school personnel, can be connected more to the project at hand, and to the identity of the organization, with proper leadership. Therefore, the results of this research possibly can be used in the planning of future professional development activities and to assist in serving students in a state of homelessness more effectively. This study was conducted with school personnel from two rural Virginia school districts using journaling, document analysis, and personal interviews as a means of data collection. I conducted interviews with school personnel who have direct interaction with students daily and are in a position to report homelessness, specifically teachers and school building administrators, which includes principal and assistant principals.

Significance of the Study

Studies related to homelessness have mostly been conducted in urban settings, in other countries, or with only one group of stakeholders such as social workers (Canfield et al., 2012).

However, I have not found studies that focus on homelessness in rural Central Virginia with school personnel as the participants. According to the Coordinator of Project Hope-Virginia, Virginia's Program for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, Patricia A. Popp, Ph.D. (personal communication, November 15, 2016) when asking local educational agency liaisons in Virginia for topics they are interested in having discussed in future trainings, the topic of rural homelessness has been noted as the most frequent response in the last year. Canfield et al. (2012) studied the perceived knowledge and awareness of social workers in the mid-western section of the United States regarding the MVA. Two-hundred and one social workers who attended a conference participated in this study by completing a survey, using a 26-item instrument called the McKinney-Vento Act Implementation Scale (MVAIS). The study found that many of the social workers, who were the homeless liaisons for their school districts were lacking in knowledge regarding the MVA. School social workers were also the focus of another study on homelessness and the MVA, conducted by Jozefowicz-Simbeni and Israel (2006), in which social workers were asked about their perceptions of how they could become more involved in the implementation of the MVA.

I also found that many of the studies on rural homelessness were conducted in Australia. Chamberlain and Johnson's (2013) study focused on how the pathways to homelessness, such as family issues, drug issue or financial issues, impacted the duration of the individual's homelessness. In my search of the peer reviewed literature, I found an empirical gap in the literature relating to homelessness in rural America, and that gap needs to be filled. I have been unable to find any studies on school teachers, administrators in rural Virginia or any state, and their perception of homelessness and their knowledge and perception of the MVA. This may be because members of society may assume that social workers are the only school personnel who

are able to identify students without a stable home in need of assistance.

Homeless youth may benefit academically from school personnel being knowledgeable about their phenomenon, which defies stereotypes of the phenomenon (Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). When students are confidentially identified as being homeless, they may have a better chance of being academically and emotionally supported by the school community (Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). They are also protected by the rights afforded them by the MVA. Benefits included in being declared homeless will vary, depending on the school district and how specifically they have budgeted funding for students in a state of homelessness (Peterson Harris, 2011). All school districts that receive Title I, Part A funding are required to set aside funds specifically for homeless education; however, the amount is determined locally (The McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.1987, 2015). MVA benefits include intangible things such as the ability to enroll in school immediately without the normally required documentation, being able to attend the student's school of origin even when they do not live in the area, being automatically eligible to receive free school meals (The McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.1987, 2015). Because of the transient homelessness, families find it helpful to be given additional time to gather birth certificates and records from previous schools. The homeless liaison may also be instrumental in assisting the family in the process of obtaining documents that have been lost or stolen. In some school districts, students are provided school supplies if they are homeless. Items that are purchased by local school division receiving Title I funds must be materials students may need to be successful in their studies.

This study included 10 participants from two school districts in rural Central Virginia: the pseudonyms Framingham and Marlborough are used for the actual counties. A study of this

capacity has never been done to focus on rural homelessness. Hallett and Tierney (2013) asserted that educators often do not understand the legal, education-related definition of homelessness. This study does not focus on one specific ethnic group, as did the writings of Johnson (2010) in which the author focused on African Americans and homelessness. Although some researchers have a noteworthy interest in helping to clarify an informational gap for a specific group, I was seeking to assist the homeless community as a whole.

School personnel and researchers in states beyond Virginia may also find the study helpful in finding a future empirical gap in the literature. Furthermore, local social service agencies, shelters, places of worship, and other entities that seek to serve homeless individuals may find the study enlightening. It is hoped that this research has a theoretical impact by extending the theory of transformational leadership by maintaining that transformational leadership can look different, based on environmental aspects, the geography and culture of the location in which a person leads.

Research Questions

Since the purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how homelessness and the MVA is perceived by school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts, the following research questions were developed.

Central Question

How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts, describe homelessness? In 2012, a study was conducted at a conference of school social workers, held in the mid-western region of the United States. The researchers used the MVAIS as a written survey instrument to determine the knowledge and perception the social workers held, regarding homelessness, the MVA, and their experience with homeless students (Canfield et al., 2012).

However, the study left a gap in the research because a study has still not been conducted in a

rural Virginia setting with school personnel other than social workers. The study also did not

explore the impact of transformational leadership on school personnel and their perceptions of

homelessness. Therefore, this question was extremely relevant to this research.

Sub-Questions

      Sub-question 1. How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe

their experience with homeless students? School mobility is a major issue in the lives of

homeless families (Julianelle & Foscarinis, 2003). Having this question included in this study

was imperative because it can assist in educating many individuals who may be unaware that

homelessness exists in the community in which they live. By having school personnel tell their

first-hand experiences, community members may begin to understand that homelessness truly

exist in rural areas. School district leaders may begin to understand if more professional

development and leadership is needed to increase understanding and recognition of students

experiencing housing challenges.

      Sub-question 2. How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe

their understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act? This question was especially significant after

the authorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. Some of the duties of a

local educational agency liaison have been more clearly defined in the act. There are now clear

expectations outlined, which detail that the liaison is responsible for ensuring that school

personnel who are responsible for providing services to students experiencing homelessness

receive appropriate professional development and support (ESSA, 2015).

<div align="center">Definitions</div>

1. *Homelessness:* The state of lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or

loss of housing due to economic hardship (The McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.1987, 2015).

2. *Local Educational Agency Liaison or Homeless Liaison:* The local school division representative responsible for ensuring that the MVA requirements are implemented and enforced (Hart-Shegos, 2011). The legal duties of the liaison will be defined in Chapter 2.

3. *Transformational leadership:* The theory which holds the principal that stakeholders can be connected more to the project at hand, as well as the identity of the organization, with the proper leadership (Burns, 1978).

4. *Educator:* A student of the theory and practice of education (Merriam-Webster, 2018).

Summary

As an introduction, foundational information for the study can be found in this chapter. I have given an overview of the MVA, stemming from its conception in 1987, and the two politicians for which it is named. Information has been given about Maria Foscarinas, an influential advocate in the fight to get the law enacted. Background information on the history of homelessness was also provided, such as the story of some of the first American homeless individuals, known as hobos.

I also relayed my experience as a public school educator, former school district homeless liaison, and a person who once met the education definition of homeless. The problem I was seeking to understand is clearly defined, as well as the purpose of the study in this chapter. The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand how school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts perceive the phenomenon of homelessness and the MVA. School personnel in this study included teachers, reading specialists, school administrators,

registrars, counselors, and homeless liaisons.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Because of the McKinney-Vento Act (MVA), homeless children are afforded many benefits and services that ordinarily would not have been available to them. In this chapter, literature is reviewed, which exists on the topic of homeless education and youth, as well as the existing literature which illustrates the theoretical framework upon which this study is based. The foundational theory for this study is Burns's (1978) theory of transformational leadership, which asserts that stakeholders within an organization can make positive changes, with proper leadership. In this study, the stakeholders were school personnel in two school districts in rural Central Virginia. The focus was to learn their perceptions of homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Act for Homeless Education, as it relates to my research. Information is presented about the concept of using teachers as transformational leaders within a school setting. Studies have shown that using teachers as leaders of their peers and students is an effective method of invoking change (Cosenza, 2015). Moreover, related to this study, Anderson (2012) has done a study specifically on transformational leadership in a rural school district where he observed the effective leadership of 2 female school administrators. It was concluded from this research that the school was able to forge partnerships with outside organizations in large ways such as forming a community cable channel operating from the school, which serves the community. Once again, the research done in a rural area, related to homelessness and youth was done internationally. This author found that most of the major research took place in Canada (Kidd, 2012) and Australia (Walsh & Douglas, 2009). While any research on rural homelessness or homelessness in general can be informative, it still leaves the argument that a gap in literature exist, and more research in the area of rural homelessness in the United States is needed.

I found many studies conducted in urban areas, in other countries, and with specific groups of school personnel who hold certain roles within a school (Canfield, Teasley, Abell, & Randolph, 2012; Chamberlain & Johnson, 2013; Edwards, Torgerson, & Sattern, 2009; Grothaus, Lorelle, Anderson, & Knight , 2011; Johnson, 2010; Meanwell, 2012; Walsh & Douglas, 2009). This finding supports the idea that there was a definite gap in the literature related to homelessness and school personnel in rural Central Virginia within the state school superintendent's Region Five (Canfield et al., 2012; Chamberlain & Johnson, 2013; Edwards et al., 2009; Grothaus et al., 2011; Johnson, 2010; Meanwell, 2012; Walsh & Douglas, 2009). In this overview, a historical view has also been given of the legal literature of the McKinney-Vento Act from the time it was originally enacted (The McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.1987, 2015). The most recent reauthorization in December, 2015 also was explained, when President Barack Obama signed it into legislature (Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015, 40 U.S.C. § 6301).

The literature reviewed in this chapter, is sub-divided, according to respective subject matter: theoretical framework, educational material related to homeless education, legislative information, and federal response to homelessness, homeless education and school personnel, social and cultural aspects of homelessness and rural homelessness.

Theoretical Framework

Burns's (1978) developed the theory of transformational leadership. The theory of transformational leadership holds the principle that stakeholders, such as teachers, can be connected more to the project at hand as well as the identity of the organization, with the proper leadership (Burns, 1978). Another perception is that teachers can also be the agents of change by being leaders within their own classrooms and among their peers. Burns (1978) embarked upon

a more philosophical approach to describing and helping others understand the concept of leadership. Several major themes emerged from Burns's work:

- Power and Purpose: The essential elements of leadership. In this theme, Burns reminded us not to over-emphasize power in leadership and establishes the relations between these two elements in effective leadership. Burns characterizes leaders who overly exhibit power as being intent only on realizing their own purpose or motives, instead of the motives of the followers.

- Leadership as a relationship of power for a mutual purpose: Burns (1978) distinguished between leaders and individuals who are solely eager for power. He explained that leaders tap into the values of their followers, instead of using leadership for their own benefit. This promotes a transforming influence, or transformational leadership.

- Leadership as a moral endeavor: Burns (1978) considered this to be his most significant theme: leadership is more than power or manipulating others.

<div align="center">**Related Literature**</div>

Material Related to Homeless Education

A massive amount of literature on homelessness in general exists. Literature abounds in the form of books, scholarly research articles, less formal articles, and dissertations. Some of the printed material provided by organizations such as the National Association for Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY, 2009) serve as resources for school personnel and those in the private sector who wish to learn more about homeless education. Because of the MVA, homeless children are positioned to obtain resources equal to those of other children. School districts are required to set aside funds for programs which fall within Title I, Part A. The funds can be used for items to support the student to succeed academically. When the MVA

funds are used for tutoring, students are given the opportunity to have a qualified instructor give them assistance to catch up on work they have missed during transitions in housing.

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) is the United States Department of Education's technical assistance center for the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (ECHY) Program. Today, much of the current literature on homelessness is available on websites of the leading organizations dedicated to homelessness and homeless education. Many school officials use such websites as resources. Organizations such as The National Center for Homeless Education offer printed materials at no cost to educational institutions. It also explains the legal obligations of school districts when enrolling students.

Legislative Information and Federal Response to Homelessness

The McKinney-Vento Act was named after two men who were instrumental advocates in the fight for a fair and equitable education for homeless children (National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty [NLCHP], 2009). Congressmen, McKinney and Vento were the influential voices who placed focus on the need for enhanced laws for homeless families, as well as other broader social causes. McKinney and Vento were not the only advocates in the fight for justice in the homeless arena. Foscarinas was a woman who worked with a group of advocates and other influential individuals in Washington, D.C. Because of their efforts, the Homeless Person's Survival Act was introduced to Congress in 1986, (NLCHP, 2009). In the original Act of 1987, prior to the reauthorization, there were 15 programs directed toward people who were homeless (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD], 2009).

According to United States Code, there are two primary sections which exist to define homelessness. One definition is used by the education community and the other is used by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development. The McKinney-Vento Act (42

U.S.C. § 11434a et seq.1987, 2015) defined what is meant when one speaks of homeless children and youths and enrollment in an educational setting (See Appendix A). This definition must be applied for educational purposes and by homeless liaisons and school personnel when properly identifying students and their families who are experiencing homelessness. The terms "enroll" and "enrollment" in the act refer to and include the act of attending academic classes and participating to the fullest extent in school activities.

School personnel need to be aware that students are experiencing homeless if they are without a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence", including if they are "children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason. Additionally, students living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; living in emergency transitional shelters and those abandoned in hospitals are considered to be in a state of homelessness. Migratory children also qualify as homeless if they are living in the circumstances noted above which meet the definition of homelessness. Of course, families who living in places not usually meant to be sleeping accommodations for human being such as cars or parks are also considered homeless, as are students who live in temporary housing or substandard housing which could include homes not considered structurally adequate (The McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.1987, 2015).

Rahman, Turner, and Elbedour (2015) wrote one of the rare articles, critiquing the United States' federal initiatives which focus on homelessness. They look at federal policies designed to address the needs of homeless youth. They studied the long-term effects the policies had on improving the lives of homeless youth. Furthermore, they asserted that while homeless youth can be incapable of building support networks and structures needed, they are able to utilize

available support systems n their surroundings (Rahman et al, 2015).

Rahman et al. (2015) cited family homelessness as a growing trend "attributed to a decade-long recession, lack of affordable housing, the tight job market, low wages, and the large number of unskilled workers who continue to lag behind other sectors of the workforce" (p.688).

Rahman et al. (2015) asserted that the first wave of research on homeless children came in the 1980s, later followed by additional research after 2004, when states were mandated by the federal and state government to collect data on homeless youth. Today, the U.S. Department of Education can assess data related to homeless students in America at a touch, such as enrollment, and state test scores (Rahman et al., 2015). There are also at least 27 federal entities, which provide programs for homeless individuals. Rahman et al. (2015) found that many have specific mandates to serve homeless youth. Still, with all of this support, the study result showed that the federal government programs have still failed in some areas.

In addition to the first definition of homelessness provided by the U.S. Department of Education, there is a second definition from United States Code (42 U.S.C. § 11302 et seq.1987, 2015) that is used by HUD when identifying individuals as homeless. The definition did not specifically focus on youth, as did the previous definition used by the education community. This definition focused on homeless individuals and their families, not only children. The definition similarly defines a person experiencing homelessness in its beginning as "an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; an individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings…" (United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, 42 U.S.C. § 11302 et seq.1987, 2015).

HUD acknowledged that individuals or families living in a public or private temporary

shelter, including motels and hotels paid for with assistance from governmental agencies or charitable organization, and individuals who have just left an institution where they resided, are considered to be experiencing homelessness. HUD, by its definition of homelessness, recognized that some homeless situations can be anticipated, as is the case with families or individuals who have been notified, by way of an eviction notice, that they must leave their home within 14 days.

While the education community views people who live extensively at a hotel or motel as homeless, HUD does not interpret the situation in the same manner. As long as there are means for a family to fund their own stay at a motel or hotel for greater than 14 days, if needed, they are not considered to be homeless. Transient families, unaccompanied youth, and those who are expected to be without permanent housing for an extended period of time due to the fleeing of domestic violence, chronic disabilities, or mental or physical health conditions are considered homeless.

On December 10, 2015, President Barrack Obama signed into law Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which reauthorized the 50-year old Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESEA), also known as the No Child Left Behind Act. Homeless education has been included in Title IX, Part A, under ESSA (2015, 40 U.S.C. § 6301). The McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C. § 11434a et seq.1987, 2015) also included a clear definition of the role and expectations of the local educational agency liaison.

Each public school district in America is required to have a homeless education liaison. Their roles and responsibilities are defined within the MVA (See Appendix B). Liaisons are designated by the LEA. They ensure children without stable homes are properly identified by school personnel through outreach activities and are immediately enrolled in school, to ensure

that they have a full and equitable opportunity to be successful in school. Liaisons are responsible for ensuring that families and students experiencing homelessness are referred to services for which they may be qualified. This would include medical and dental services, as well as childcare services that is sponsored by the Head Start Program. LEAs must disseminate information related to public notice of the educational rights of homeless individuals, in locations such as schools, homeless shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens that are frequently visited by parents or guardians, and affected children and youths.

In the case of an enrollment dispute, the liaison would assist the family and the school in mediation, as well as ensure the family understands all transportation services that are available to them, including the option for the student to receive transportation to their school of origin instead of a school in the district where they currently reside. According to the MVA, the liaison must ensure school personnel who provide services to students and families experiencing homelessness receive professional development and support (The McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.1987, 2015). The enacted laws provide a foundation on which school division administrators can begin provide information to their employees and to learn the information they already possess about homeless education.

School Personnel and Knowledge of Homeless Education

Canfield et al. (2012) conducted a study of school social workers from various parts of the Midwestern part of the United States. These authors did not discover any studies related to the roles and responsibilities of homeless liaisons who are also school social workers, responsible for implementing the benefits of the MVA. Canfield et al. asserted that knowledge of the MVA was definitely lacking, as well as compliance of the law.

It was asserted by Canfield et al. (2012) that knowledge regarding the MVA was low

when the social workers, many of whom were the homeless liaisons for their school districts, were surveyed, using the McKinney-Vento Implementation Scale (MVAIS), a 26-item instrument. To date, Canfield et al. has been found to be most closely related to this study.

Canfield et al. (2012) remarked on the need for future studies in other geographical locations, with other school personnel. In the quantitative case study, the McKinney-Vento Act Implementation Scale (MVAIS) was used to measure participant's perceived implementation of the MVA. The researchers sought to understand the reliability of the MVAIS as a tool for assessing the perceived knowledge and awareness social workers in the mid-western region of the United States possess regarding the McKinney-Vento Act. Participants were 201 school social workers who attended a regional conference. The findings indicated that the MVAIS was an adequate tool for evaluating the perceived implementation of the MVA. The researchers acknowledged the study was limited because it only surveyed social workers in the mid-western part of the United States.

Canfield et al. (2012) defined the MVA and its legal constructs. They also stated, "Currently, no method exists to measure the implementation of the MVA" (p.411). The researchers acknowledged "the need to also determine the levels of implementation based on a given school district or geographic location (Canfield et al., 2012, p.411). They further explained, "It will help determine whether funding levels are appropriate in making school-based social service personnel aware and knowledgeable of the policy's provisions and in facilitating its enforcement (Canfield et al., 2012, p. 411)." Canfield et al., more than any other found, have validated the need for this study and established a gap in the literature that should be filled.

Social and Cultural Aspects of Homelessness

Johnson (2010) presented a study on the history of African-Americans and homelessness.

Her research covered the historical periods from colonization through the present to address the concern of African American homelessness. Other than her research, nothing else could be found on homelessness in the black community. Although literature exists about homelessness, there are larger amounts of information about specific populations of homeless individuals than others. For example, it is not uncommon to find information on urban homelessness. However, "the story of African Americans is usually absent from the mainstream textbook study of homeless people" (Johnson, 2010, p.583).

In her review of the literature on homelessness, Meanwell (2012) pointed out that "sociological work on homelessness tends to focus on two broad contexts within which people experience homelessness: on the streets or in other outdoor locations, and within homeless shelters or other service locations (such as soup kitchens, drop-in centers, and general homelessness outreach and assistance organizations)" (p. 75). She was exploring the two broad contexts and shedding light on daily activities of homeless individuals in homeless shelters and those who live life on the streets. Reviewing other studies of researchers such as Meanwell and Canfield et al. (2012) further supported the gap in the literature. Even as recently as 2012, researchers were not widely studying rural homelessness, based on my own thorough research of articles on the subject and available literature. Furthermore, there are differences in rural and urban homelessness that need to be addressed and revealed. For example, in rural areas, it is not typical to see soup kitchens and drop-in centers. In most rural areas, there are often paved or dirt roads, instead of streets. It is not common to see a homeless person sleeping on a rural road. In terms of rural homelessness, there are social service agencies that will assist individuals and families in finding temporary housing such as motels or shelters, but they are few. Because of this, many of the families are "doubled-up" and living with relatives who will allow them to stay

with them temporarily.

In revisiting the definition of homelessness, a person is considered to be homeless if they are living with another family temporarily and do not have a home of their own due to a lack of permanent housing (The McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.1987, 2015). Home-sharing and homelessness can appear to be similar when multiple families live under the same roof. Therefore, defining homelessness can become complex.

There are many reasons for homelessness, such as financial hardship, substance abuse, domestic violence, and a lack of affordable housing. A relevant topic for future research could be to determine the relationship between homeless adults and their housing and family situation as children. The answer depends greatly upon the pathway or the decisions the individuals or the persons responsible for them chose to make. "The metaphor of a pathway is preferable because there can be pathways out of homelessness" (Chamberlain & Johnson, 2013, p. 61). In their research, authors Chamberlain and Johnson (2013) were responsible for what they have identified as the five pathways to homelessness: housing crisis, family breakdown, substance abuse, mental health issues, and the youth to adult pathway. Their belief was that these pathways exist when a minor, experiencing homelessness, turns into an adult and is still homeless.

Homelessness is not an easy experience (Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel, 2006). Variations of homelessness have been identified by researchers, within the homeless population. For example, some research highlights the differences between the transitionally, episodically, and the chronically homeless (Meanwell, 2012). Meanwell (2012) noted that some researchers identified differences in the old stereotypes of homelessness versus the new perceptions of the phenomenon. To understand homelessness in its purest form, it is important to understand the

background and history of the phenomenon known as homelessness. Meanwell (2012) noted

additional history of the phenomenon of homelessness. In the 1930's, homelessness was

primarily a problem for males during the Great Depression. Hobos, or homeless people rode in

trains from one town to another for the primary purpose of having shelter (Meanwell, 2012).

Beginning in the 1980s, with an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness in

the United States, the shifting demographics of the homeless population to include more women,

children, and families, and the passage of the MVA in 1987, research on homelessness grew

exponentially.

There are occasions when children are born into homelessness (Hart-Sheegos, 1999). It

seems reasonable that homeless mothers may experience stress due to the financial and possible

physical burdens of homelessness that may be transferred to the unborn child. In 1999, 5 out of

10 of homeless women versus 15% of the general population had not had a prenatal visit in the

first trimester of pregnancy (Hart-Sheegos, 1999).

Grant et al. (2013) sought to determine how far the system of understanding victims of

the phenomena of homelessness had evolved over the last 25 years. Grant et al. discussed family

homelessness as a major social and public health issue in the United States. They pointed out

that family homelessness has been documented since the 1980s. The literature of the 1980s and

1990s was compared to more recent data of the 2000s to determine any culture changes,

vocabulary changes, and outward worldview changes toward homelessness. One issue that was

noted by this researcher was that homelessness, as defined in this research was never discussed

as being a problem in rural areas of the United States (Grant et al., 2013). The article referred to

large cities such as Boston, Massachussetts, Washington, D.C., and New York, New York, when

noting the increase in homelessness for children and families in those areas. It should be noted

that some complexities of homelessness mentioned by Grant et al. (2013) were cross

geographical boundaries, such as the vulnerability of being homeless, the behavioral health

issues, and the impact of child health and well-being. More cross-geographical issues that affect

rural, suburban, and urban homeless youth and adults are multiple stressors, cumulative stressors

and toxic stress (Grant et al., 2013). The outcome of the study did not confirm government

programs and assistance for homeless individuals are closing the social and economic

achievement gap. Instead, the study demonstrated we have become a nation of more inequality

for homeless people in the areas of income, affordable housing (Grant et al., 2013), which are

two major areas in which equality is most likely desired.

While housing and income are important, they must be considered on an individual

family basis. If possible, it is most favorable to deal with the child's situation through material

or financial resources, rather than to separate a family and remove the child from the home.

Walsh and Douglas (2009) asserted that when they interviewed workers in rural Queensland,

Australia, they found that many children were removed from homes and prevented from

reuniting with their families when the children's needs were not met as a result of homelessness

or poverty. During their research, the respondents suggested practical ideas as to how

disadvantaged families could be helped and prevent the intervention of Child Protective Services

(CPS) or similar agencies.

Grothaus et al. (2011) wanted to know the perceptions of children and parents who are

experiencing homelessness, as it relates to their academic needs and the services they consider to

be helpful. In their study, they had nine parents and 13 children participate who were served by

one of three programs offered by an agency for the homeless. They used personal interviews as

a primary method of collecting information. Parents were asked about their child's experience at

school as a homeless person. Then, the children were interviewed up to six weeks later. The

parents discussed services their children were receiving at school, such as tutoring, mentoring

programs or the services included in an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for students

with special needs. In this particular school district, there was a weekly program, in which

volunteer tutors were paired with students to assist with homework and to interact with them

during educational games. Each session lasted 90-120 minutes. Transportation was provided

and each participant left with a meal that was donated by a local restaurant at the end of the

session.

This was especially helpful for students without a stable home. The results revealed

"eight of the nine parents in the study stated that they generally were not concerned about their

children's academic experiences or performance" (Grothaus et al., 2011, p.194). Parents

discussed the fact that mobility had a lot of influence on their children's academic performance.

Four of the nine parents viewed mobility as a factor in the variety of services their child receives.

Most parents noted a need for teachers and mentors to reach out to them more. They noted

different requirements of various school districts, which create a challenge for their children to

catch up academically when moving from school to school (Grothaus et al., 2011).

This research was done in the Mid-Atlantic region of the United States and did not

include any school faculty or staff as participants. The researchers studied the students Grade

Point Averages (GPAs) and determined that the mean GPAs were stable from the first marking

period through the fourth marking period. The researchers used a paired samples t-test to

evaluate differences in the mean number of failing grades (Grothaus et al., 2011).

The researchers also believe it would be helpful if counselors address any concerns with the

homeless liaison throughout the child's time at the school. One of the beliefs the researchers

have is that if school counselors are "systemic change agents, they can lead the way in advocating for removal of barriers to student success" (Grothaus et al., 2011, p.198).

Other summative ideas included "facilitating the delivery of evidence-based response services for these students to promote their academic, career, and personal/social success" (Grothaus et al., 2011, p.198). Developing small group counseling and providing information on topics such as academic and social skills, problem solving, and self-esteem is also important. The students and their families also need to be treated fairly regarding equitable access to advanced and rigorous coursework in school and access to community resources.

According to Grothaus et al. (2011), if a school counselor could take time to coordinate tutoring, internships, and arranging transportation to school events, it could make a difference in a student's life. In some schools, counselors have community resources which have workers to provide food for children to take home with them and also provide individual counseling. If school personnel could make adjustments for student needs it could prove to be beneficial. Adjustments could include allowing a student to get additional rest in the morning once they arrive at school or allowing time during the day for homework that could not get done at home.

Families should also be connected to local agencies that could be helpful to anyone experiencing homelessness. This could include local, state, and national agencies. This could enhance a family's "sense of belonging in the community and ensure equitable educational opportunities" (Grothaus et al., 2011, p.198). Staff in guidance offices of schools should also consider planning informational programs or prevention seminars that promote a trustworthy environment between school and home, as well as positive academic performance. By conducting programs such as this, stakeholders, including educational stakeholders and community stakeholders will have increased awareness about issues which face the homeless

population (Grothaus et al., 2011). Efforts such as this are directly related to my study and could change the perceptions of school district personnel about homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Act. The authors include a list of helpful community resources in the appendix of their research paper, which left the reader with knowledge and resources to utilize.

Perceptions of homelessness can often be formed by what is viewed or read in media outlets such as television, radio, and Internet. Schneider (2014) conducted a qualitative case study which explored the impact of the public's emotional discourse for homelessness and how homelessness is portrayed in the media. The researcher interviewed several focus groups in search of how the individuals within the group actually perceived and verbalized opinions regarding homelessness. It was determined that public perception and discussion greatly impacts the portrayal of the homeless population in various media outlets.

Additionally, in discussions, the public often shows sympathy and emotional discourse for homelessness. Schneider's (2014) study had its limitations because it was done with only 43 randomly selected participants in Calgary at the University of Calgary.

The researcher went on to make the claim that social science's perception of media audiences has changed drastically in the past 30 years. The concept of audience has become vague. According to Schneider (2014), if a researcher wants to study audiences, the task has become increasingly difficult because of what is considered to be the definition of an audience. In his study, the media text, events, and objects were not specific enough to solidify the conception of an audience.

Schneider (2014) gathered his information from focus groups he examined and asked about how people talk about homelessness. When discussing his position and role in the study, Schneider believed what people knew about homelessness came from being part of a media

audience since he was interviewing people who did not have direct experience with

homelessness, personally or through a close friend or relative. He felt that most people only

have casual, intermittent contact with homeless people, such as the interaction you would have if

a homeless person asked for money on the street (Schneider, 2014). Therefore, "people may

sometimes reference the same media text in their interactions, particularly when a spectacular

event related to homelessness is reported widely (Schneider, 2014, p.237). Schneider (2014)

learned that many study participants learned about the phenomenon of homelessness and the

perceptions from images of homeless people and from exposure they had to someone else's

perception of homelessness.

Researchers such as Kidd (2012) have opened a forum to encourage critical dialogue

about this phenomenon. He did so by having an commentary with invited responses to the topic

of homeless and street-involved youth. At the time of his research, he viewed the current studies

on this topic as being "stagnant with a research body focused primarily on analyses of risk,

hopelessly inadequate policy frameworks in most cities, diminishing funds for services, and

decreasing media attention.

Rural Homelessness

The researcher found one study on rural homelessness in the United States. Jackson and

Shannon (2014) studied 96 volunteer participants for a study which examined the factors

associated with social support in a rural, homeless population. The study took place, researching

homeless citizens of the rural areas of the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The average participant

was 36 years of age. Females represented 74% of the participants, with 47% reported being

separated, widowed or divorced as their marital status. According to the article, there was a

significant association between education and family/friend social support status x^2-*9.969,*

p=007. Individuals who had obtained a high school diploma or the equivalent reported a greater level of social support (Jackson & Shannon, 2014).

Jackson and Shannon (2014) provided a look into the plight of homelessness as only someone living in a rural area would know it. Rural homelessness accounts for about 7% of total homelessness (Jackson & Shannon, 2014). Rural homelessness is a unique problem, and when trying to define rural homelessness, the issue becomes more complex. In comparison to urban areas, rural areas are faced with fewer job opportunities, lower wages, and longer periods of unemployment (Bread for the World Institute, 2005). There are far fewer shelters in rural areas than in urban areas; therefore, people experiencing homelessness are less likely to live on the street or in a shelter, and more likely to live in a car or camper, or with relatives in overcrowded or substandard housing (NCH 2007b: Definitions and Demographics section).

Therefore, to accurately capture and depict rural homelessness, the definition needs to be less restrictive; meaning it should not comprise only those who live in shelters or on the streets, because such a definition would not provide a true representation of rural homelessness (NCH 2007b). As Hofferth and Iceland (1998) stated, "Relationships in traditional rural communities are often perceived as embedded in networks of close personal ties that govern every aspect of an individual's life" (p. 574).

Hofferth and Iceland (1998) examined social capital in rural and urban communities and found that individuals living in rural areas were more likely to have family-only exchanges than those living in an urban environment. This research is important to understand family dynamics and why some rural families experiencing homelessness choose live with relatives instead of in shelters. Interestingly, related to that finding, Johnson (2010) and Jackson and Shannon (2014) found that underprivileged individuals in urban areas are less likely to seek or receive assistance

from parents than individuals in rural area. The family bond in rural areas seems to be stronger and more conducive to the helpfulness of family. However, the information is inconsistent between similar studies. In that same study, there were frequent exchanges (giving and receiving) with both family and friends in urban areas (pp.52-53).

In acknowledging the limitations of their study that warranted discussion, Jackson and Shannon (2014) stated several valid points related to the limitations caused by the study being done in only one state in the United States and this may not be representative of other areas. They also mentioned that the participants were all volunteers. Had they enlisted non-voluntary participants, the results of the research may have also yielded different results. Jackson and Shannon went on to admit they "relied heavily on self-report data" (p. 67).

They exposed another problem a researcher on rural homelessness may encounter. They found that there was a dearth on literature related to rural homelessness and with this dearth it is difficult to assess the social and economic determinants of homelessness, which makes it challenging to dive deeper into rural homelessness (Jackson & Shannon, 2014). Therefore, some studies referenced in this analysis are dated and may not accurately reflect current rural homeless experiences. Moreover, some literature regarding social support was also dated; however, these studies serve as important background knowledge of the various ways in which social support may be demonstrated.

Schneider (2014), a Canadian author, studied emotion discourse and the reproduction of social inequality as it relates to homelessness. In the qualitative case study, Schneider proposed the question, "What is the impact of the publics' emotional discourse for homelessness on the way homelessness is portrayed in the media?" (p.237). In total, 43 randomly selected participants from the public sector formed several focus groups. The researcher interviewed the

focus groups in search of how they actually perceived and verbalized opinions regarding

homelessness. They also discussed how the public often shows sympathy and emotional

discourse for homelessness.

Schneider (2014) examined the data related to how homelessness was discussed and

conceptualized. Schneider, in her focus groups, specifically studied emotional discourses in

social interaction, as it relates to homelessness. This included the evolutionary and neurological

aspects of emotion, the identification and definition of emotions, the ontological status of

emotion, how emotions are engendered in engagements with media and how emotions are

presented and managed in media products. Before the group sessions, Schneider (2014)

provided articles to participants in the focus group from a local newspaper. The researcher

wanted to gauge public perception and reaction to homelessness. This was based on various

articles about homelessness that were strategically given to the participants to elicit strong

feelings. The articles ranged in nature. One article about how homeless people were using an

indoor public walkway system as an area in which to use drugs. Another article quoted Canada's

governor general when he condemned Canada's weak record of taking care of its homeless

citizens.

Schneider (2014) also used another article. It described five people at various stages of

"recovery" from homelessness, from an actively homeless person to a person who recently

obtained their own apartment. Participants were also e-mailed a video clip about a "bumbot,"

created by and Atlanta bar owner, a mobile device that shines lights, makes noise, and sprays

water to deter loitering outside his bar by apparently homeless people who were said to be

dealing drugs (Schneider, 2014, p.239)

It was determined that public perception and discussion greatly impacts the portrayal of

the homeless population of the homeless population in various media outlets. The researcher

then took these findings and compared them to the results of previous studies. The study was

conducted in Calgary, but it would be interesting to see the outcome, had it been done in the

United States.

Researchers Edwards et al. (2009) penned the research article *Paradoxes of providing*

rural social services: The case of homeless youth. In this study, they explored the impact of

organizational environment on serving homeless youth. In this case, the organizational

environment is a rural geographical area. There were 30 participants in the survey including 20

social service providers and 10 homeless youth. Not surprisingly, the researchers found a need

for better coordination of services among community agencies. Also, there was a need for better

collaboration between governmental and non-governmental agencies. Edwards et al.

acknowledged that rural homelessness is relatively understudied and it is not surprising that data

and research findings about homeless youth in rural places are lacking. Although academic

studies of rural youth abound, studies of rural homeless youth do not.

The authors analyzed three paradoxes of providing homeless youth services in rural

places. For anyone who lives in a rural area, it is a relief to know that someone has finally

revealed the plight that exist not only for services unavailable to homeless youth, but for other

services that are often needed for everyone in rural areas. Essential services and retail needs are

hindered due to geographical constraints in many cases. This could include urban and suburban

conveniences such as grocery stores or medical facilities in close proximity of a community.

The paradoxical findings of Edwards et al. (2009) that follow were astounding and

thought provoking, but are likely no surprise for those who live in rural areas. They stated,

"Paradoxically, rural towns in these geographically wide counties are themselves small and

compact-not places where homeless youth are likely to find urban anonymity" (p.336). The researchers believed that the lack of anonymity in rural areas, is what may drive homeless people outside of their town, in an attempt to protect their privacy. But the central paradox was that the distance and topography that can reduce access to services for youth also is the distance that isolates small towns into self-aware, self-identified communities of people. These people can be conscious of and concerned about local social problems such as youth homelessness.

A second paradox a various socioeconomic structures in a rural area that can often encourage local residents to have a disapproval of homeless youth and not attempt to become more aware of the topic, for fear of how their culture and neighborhood was perceived. Residents often refuse to believe that urban problems like youth homelessness indeed exist in their town (Edwards et al., 2009). But if residents do become aware, the same nostalgia for the small town combined with cultural conservatism may further raise the disapproval that homeless youth experience on the streets of small towns and diminish the kinds of services they find available. Residents' sense of wishing to preserve the quality and safety of small-town life, or perhaps the reputation of their town, may lead them to react punitively toward youth who threaten those values.

Finally, Edwards et al. (2009) asserted that rural youth experience the competing effects of organizations within the community. They especially focus on the role of organizational structure and bureaucratic processes, resources (human and financial), and collaboration. The researchers believed that because rural areas often experience extreme resource volatility, government agencies may be motivated by resource constraints to work together more closely, and to cooperate more often with nongovernmental service organizations.

Summary

In this chapter, there was a demonstrated gap in the literature as it relates to this study. It also served as a primary overview of the literature, which exists on the topic of homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Act and the literature related to the theory guiding the study. The literature was categorized according to subtopics: educational material related to homeless education, literature related to homeless education and school personnel, literature related to social and cultural aspects of homelessness and literature related to rural homelessness and transformational leadership in education. The largest amount of literature was in the area of social and cultural aspects of homelessness. This stands to seem reasonable since many studies have been conducted which highlight the social plight which is caused by homelessness (Grant et al., 2013).

The literature supports the idea that studies have not been conducted in rural areas and have not examined how school personnel perceive homelessness and the MVA. The voices of school personnel in rural Virginia, to include classroom teachers and administrators such as principals and assistant principals have not yet been heard as they relate to their perception of homeless education and homeless youth. Studies were conducted in urban areas, as well as in other countries outside the United States of America. Studies have also been done on the phenomenon of homelessness, from the points of view of parents and students who have been affected. There are so many different facets of the homeless community and for that reason, it is understandable that many groups have not been studied and that many gaps exist. Two definitions of homelessness used by federal agencies, the United States Department of Education and the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, serving children and youth are also reviewed in detail in this chapter. The conflicting definitions are often the source of distension between local school districts and local housing authorities when attempting to

assist a single family.

      The theoretical framework of Burns's (1978) leadership theory may be new to many individuals. However, my firm belief is that this theory best supports the idea that if exposed to the proper authoritative figures, such as homeless liaisons, and the proper education and training related to the McKinney-Vento Act, school personnel may be more likely to be interested in service projects or initiatives for homeless students (Burns, 1978). More recently research is showing that teachers should be considered as effective leaders to their peers and their students. They can possibly serve as transformational leaders, alongside administrators and become agents of change. The concept is that teachers may be beneficial in connecting their peers to important information that can help students socially, personally and academically. However, it also suggests a need for more studies in the future if the phenomenon of homelessness is to be conquered and individuals are to be educated on the topic.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts perceive the phenomenon of homelessness and the The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVA, 1987, 2015). In this research, school personnel included teachers, reading specialists, school administrators, registrars, counselors and homeless liaisons. Based on the MVA, homeless students were generally defined as individuals who "lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" due to loss of housing or economic hardship, according to MVA. The theory guiding this study was Burns's (1978) theory of transformational leadership, which is the principle that stakeholders, such as teachers, can be connected more to the project at hand and as well as the identity of the organization, with the proper leadership. Participants kept journals and agreed to personal interviews as a means of data collection. Data collected was reviewed and analyzed to address the research questions.

Included in this chapter is the design, the research questions, the participants, the procedures and my role as the researcher. I also discuss the guiding questions for the personal interviews, and the specific questions that were used to interview the superintendent and the district's homeless liaison. Additionally, the prompting question that was used for the journaling activity for participants is discussed.

It was imperative to establish trustworthiness for the study to increase credibility. The study's dependability, confirmability and transferability are also discussed. Therefore, in this chapter, I discuss how this was accomplished, and ethical considerations such as eliminating personal bias and strategically selecting participants I do not supervise.

Design

I used a phenomenological study design for this qualitative research. This was the best type of design to study a small group of school personnel asked to describe their perception of an experience. The meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept is best described through a phenomenological study (Creswell, 2013, p. 57).

The specific approach of this research was transcendental phenomenology. Transcendental means "everything is perceived freshly, as if for the first time" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Moustakas (1994) preferred using the transcendental perspective of learning in his seminars, because "learners are encouraged to enter into a process of authentic self-presence, thinking and choosing a way of discovering and knowing nature and meaning of significant experiences to identify formation and selfhood" (p. 63). I chose transcendental phenomenology as the approach for this study because the foundation is questions that give a direction and focus. The study included 10 individuals employed by two rural school districts in Virginia. I wanted to understand how school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts described homelessness. Additionally, there was a personal interest in knowing how they would describe their experience with students without stable and adequate housing, and how they described the McKinney-Vento Act. Moustakas preferred using the transcendental perspective of learning in his seminars because "learners are encouraged to enter into a process of authentic self-presence, thinking and choosing a way of discovering and knowing nature and meaning of significant experiences to identify formation and selfhood" (p. 63). The questions in a transcendental phenomenological approach to a study tend to promote an awakening in participants to further interest and concern for what is experienced. It would be beneficial if school personnel have more interest in the phenomenon of rural homelessness because of this study. Moustakas (1994) spoke highly of the use of a transcendental phenomenological approach when studying small

groups, as in the small groups and individual school personnel who was examined in this study from two rural school districts.

Creswell (2013) noted that qualitative research starts with what one believes they know or assumes. Along with assumptions, they form the study of research problems to describe what meaning an individual or a group assign to a societal issue by using theoretical frameworks. He noted that qualitative researchers use a less familiar, but emerging approach to inquiry. The approach involves "the collection of data in a natural setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is both inductive and deductive and establishes patterns or themes" (Creswell, 2013, p.37). In the final report, Creswell (2013) stipulated that the voices of the participants should be included, as well as the reflexivity of the researcher, a deep description and an interpretation of the problem, including its contribution to the body of literature or an opportunity for change (Creswell, 2013). Creswell acknowledged that his definition of qualitative research included many elements of Denzin and Lincoln's (2005) work, like the idea that "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings in an effort to interpret the phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3).

Similarly, the focus of Moustakas's (1994) transcendental or psychological phenomenology is less on the experiences of the researcher and more on the description of the experiences of participants. Therefore, the study is conducted in the participants' natural setting. I went into their school districts for the personal interviews or conducted phone interviews if a person interview was not convenient. At the end of the study, my goal was to have opened a door to lead to school district administrators and homeless liaisons rethinking the scope of the individuals to whom they extend training, related to the McKinney-Vento Act.

Research Questions

Central Question

How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts, describe homelessness?

Sub-Questions

Sub-question 1. How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe their experience with homeless students?

Sub-question 2. How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe their understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act?

Setting

This study consisted of school personnel who work at two sites, which are individual school districts located in the rural Virginia counties of Framingham and Marlborough. The county names are pseudonyms for actual counties in Virginia. The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE, 2017) divides the 132 Virginia school districts into eight superintendents' regions. The region in which I was employed is Region Eight. I was not personally or professionally familiar with any of the participants from in any of the school divisions studied . Framingham County Public Schools is in Region Eight and Marlborough County is located in Region Five.

According to the 'School Division Report Card" on the VDOE website (2017), the county of Framingham had a total of 2,089 students enrolled for the 2017-2018 school year. They reported approximately 60%, or 1,259 of those students as disadvantaged or qualified to receive free or reduced pricing on breakfast and lunch. The VDOE website (2018) also has information for the county of Marlborough. The county reported having a total of 3,589 students during the 2017-2018 school year, with 1,209 or approximately 34% of those students as being disadvantaged or qualifying for free or reduced-priced meals.

Information related to the actual number of homeless students reported by these counties was obtained from the website for Project Hope - Virginia (2017), coordinated by William & Mary. The site showed that the county of Framingham identified and reported thirty-three homeless youth and Marlborough County reported one hundred six homeless youth for the same school year. Therefore, Framingham reported less than 1% of their students as homeless and Marlborough reported slightly over 1% as homeless youth.

Participants

In selecting the participants for the study, I used purposeful sampling, which involves the inquirer choosing the site and the participants because they can "purposely inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2013, p. 125). Each school district employs one superintendent and one liaison who was filling a position to be an advocate for the rights of homeless children within the school district and to ensure that their needs are being met within the district.

The study involved 10 school employees from two school districts located in the rural Central Virginia counties of Framingham and Marlborough. The county names are pseudonyms for actual counties in Virginia. Creswell (2013) stated that he has known phenomenological studies to be done with as few as one participant and as many as 325 participants. More commonly, phenomenological studies are conducted with a number of participants toward the lower end of the spectrum. I conducted a personal interview with each participant. Pseudonyms was used for all participants. There were no participants under the age of 18 years old, and all participants were full-time employees of the school district. Participants were both male and female and represented all ethnicities.

I made initial contact with the school division's superintendent or other individual with authority to grant permission for me to contact the employees of the school district (See Appendix C). A mass e-mail correspondence or letter was distributed to all school district employees, via the human resources office or another appropriate office within the division with the ability to forward information to the entire district at once. The e-mail contained a brief explanation stating that I have permission from the superintendent to conduct research within the school district related to the education of homeless youth. I requested that the department assisting in forwarding my information also confirm this in a preliminary statement. The e-mail had the consent form (See Appendix D) for the study attached, containing details of the study, my contact information, and dates by which they should contact me if they have an interest in participating in the study. I also stressed that they must meet the requirements outlined in the consent form.

I contacted the interested individuals to discuss specific details and ensure their understanding of the expectations for the study, such as their willingness to express their thoughts in and experiences in writing, with the assistance of a writing prompt (See Appendix E). Their writing went beyond the writing prompt if they choose to share more. In the journal, without using real names of students, they noted observations related to students they notice in their classes. Notes included observations made about students who exhibited what they believe to be signs of homelessness. The journal also included notes about their perception of the lack of student and families without stable housing in their rural area.

Procedures

None of the research for this study could be done until I received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (Appendix F). Authorization was obtained from superintendents or their

designees of the school districts in which the school personnel are employed. In some cases, principals of individual schools may be authorized to allow this researcher to invite school personnel to participate in the research. I contacted volunteers from the initial pool of individuals until I have confirmed at least five-10 school personnel per school district, for a total of 10 participants. I planned to meet with them in a setting that is familiar to them. I also planned to meet separately with the division superintendent or the homeless liaison, depending upon availability, for in-depth interviews. However, I was only able to meet with the homeless liaison for Marlborough. The Acting Superintendent of Framingham County, who was also the division's long-time homeless liaison, retired after she gave authorization for this research. If I found that a school district had a plan in place to educate its employees regarding the McKinney-Vento Act, I analyzed any documents they have to support the professional development.

For data collection and analysis, I bracketed out any personal bias. To aid in bracketing my personal bias, I did not engage in conversation with the participants, related to my own experiences as an educator with homeless youth. I remained focused on allowing their voices to be heard in their own words during the interviews. I also did not add, take away or make any assumptions about any of the participants' thoughts when interpreting their journaling. Instead, I sought clarification directly from the participant. Additionally, I employed Moustakas's (1994) method of data analysis. Data collection initially included asking broad questions of the participants about what they have experienced related to the phenomenon. The central and guiding research questions in this study complied with this specification. Regarding analysis, Moustakas's method includes interview transcriptions, highlighting significant statements, which Moustakas referred to as horizontalization and gathering meaning from these ideas and putting them into themes. I then used these forms of data analysis and collection to relay what the

participants have experienced. This ensured that triangulation is employed until data saturation is reached.

The Researcher's Role

As the human instrument in this study, my role included selecting the location in which the research was conducted. In this study, two sites were chosen, based on location and based on the non-existence of any relationship with the proposed participants. Bias was minimized or eliminated since I was not affiliated with these school districts. I was employed in Region Eight, as sectioned by the Virginia Department of Education. The study was conducted with participants in other school districts. I chose to go into the familiar settings of the participants. This included their schools, offices or local eateries in which they were comfortable participating in interviews. I made the participants as comfortable with the process as possible. This included thoroughly explaining the study process to them, implementing the process and debriefing after the research has been completed. I explained the need for consent forms and the intended purpose and use of the information that was collected. I created the personal interview questions (See Appendix G) for all school personnel, including a separate set of questions for the superintendents and the homeless liaison. The questions which pertained to professional development efforts related to homeless education that was more division-specific. .

I did have assumptions for the study, and for this reason I chose not to conduct the study in any school or district within the region in which I was employed. Data collection was done in a manner in which to increase credibility. Dr. Patricia Popp,Virginia State Director of Homeless Education, served as the content area specialist for this study to ensure accuracy of information provided. I eliminated any aspect of the research that impeded the data analysis.

Data Collection

After obtaining IRB approval and the approval of the school district superintendent, I contacted the employees of the two school districts. I used purposeful sampling. All participants were volunteers.

As a method of obtaining consent for study participation, the purpose and its intended use was explained to each participant verbally and in writing. I used three forms of data collection: personal interviews, document analysis, including the review of journals kept by school personnel during the research study, and a review of any professional development materials used by the school district in employee training sessions on homeless education.

Journaling

The journal prompt and journaling materials were given to the participants after the initial consent and confirmation of their participation. However, journals were collected after the individual interviews. When using journaling as a means of data collection, there are important considerations for the researcher. Instructions should be given to participants and the researcher should determine if all participants are capable writers (Creswell, 2013). There was a possibility some participants who would not have adequate penmanship, or the ability to express themselves in written form, although they may express themselves well verbally. Among case studies and narrative research in particular, journaling is a popular data collection process, according to Creswell (2013).

Interviews

According to Creswell (2013) appropriate interviews include open-ended, general and focused questions for the purpose of understanding the central phenomenon in the study (p. 163). Prior to conducting the individual interviews, I had a content expert review my questions. After IRB approval, I also had a pilot group review and answer the questions to ensure clarity

and appropriateness. I did not want to impose upon the busy schedules of high-level school administrators. Therefore, the questions I have planned to ask the school division superintendent and the homeless liaison were substantial and significant, but not overly lengthy or time consuming. The interview process took 1 to 2 hours.

At the beginning of the interview, I disclosed that I was audio recording the for the purpose of transcribing the interview verbatim. Consent forms were signed, prior to beginning the interview. Because of the structure of the open-ended questions, the answers for all of the questions directly corresponded with the research questions posed and either supported or contradicted the answers given by the school personnel, as it relates to their perception of the professional development opportunities they have received. Questions were adjusted during the interview, based on the answer given by the respondent. Each of the following questions is deeply grounded in the literature and was in support of the three research questions:

1. Tell me about yourself. Please include how long you've been teaching, the grade levels and subjects you teach and any other information you would like to share.

2. How would you describe the demographics of your school (ie. Mostly disadvantaged, rural, middle-class?)

3. How do you describe homelessness?

4. How do you believe homelessness looks in rural Virginia.

5. What types of experiences have you had with students experiencing homelessness in your school division?

6. How would you describe the McKinney-Vento Act

7. What provisions are afforded to students experiencing homelessness in your school division?

8. What are some of the aspects of the legal definition of homelessness?

9. Please tell me about any time you have had to report your knowledge of a homeless youth?

10. If you have ever reported that a youth was homeless to a school official, to whom did you make the report and was any action taken?

Questions 1 and 2 had dual purposes. They were designed to make the participant feel comfortable and they also give this researcher demographic information about the participant. Creswell (2009, p. 130) refers to questions of this type as "icebreakers" because they help to build a rapport between the interviewer and the participant. Question 3 is directly related to the central research question. The purpose is to understand how the participant describes homelessness. This was crucial because it addressed the gap in the literature. The voice of school personnel in rural Virginia had yet to be heard, related to their perception of homelessness. Question 5 allows the educator to describe their personal experiences with students experiencing homelessness. By having school personnel tell their first-hand experiences, community members may begin to understand that homelessness truly exist in rural areas if there is a doubt.

Questions 6-10 are relevant to sub-question 2 of the research questions. These questions were especially significant after the authorization of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015. They refer to the McKinney-Vento Act and the participants' knowledge of the law. There are now clear expectations outlined for the duties of the local homeless education liaison. The liaison is responsible for ensuring that school personnel who are responsible for providing services to students experiencing homelessness receive appropriate professional development and support related to understanding the phenomena of homelessness (Every Student Succeeds

Act, 2015). Therefore, the answers to this set of questions is relevant in understanding if school personnel have knowledge of the MVA and if they have been offered any professional development training on the topic.

Document Analysis

To further understand professional development efforts, I requested that the homeless liaison provide documentation of any training they have provided to their personnel, related to homelessness. Through a review of these documents, I obtained a better understanding of the professional development to which the employees were exposed. Through the various forms of data collection, triangulation was achieved to validate data.

Over the years, Creswell (2013) kept a list of data types as they developed. He called his list "A Compendium of Data Collection Approaches in Qualitative Research" (2013, p.131). His list included observations, interviews, audiovisual materials and documents. Documents included analyzing public documents, such as memos, minutes, records, archival materials (Creswell, 2013). This was the category which most closely relates to the documents I wished to review, related to professional development of school personnel.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

</div>

My study involved three forms of data collection. Three were selected to achieve triangulation. I outlined the data analysis methods I used for each of the three forms of data collection, supported by the writings of primary source authors. I synthesized and weaved all three forms of data together to determine a solid, valid and trustworthy set of results.

Creswell (2013) referred to data collection methods such as journaling and reviewing the professional development materials from the school districts as document research. He noted the need to obtain proper permission to use the material in research, prior to reviewing the

documents and journals. I coded the responses of the participants and then noted the patterns or themes. Although counting codes is usually a strategy connected with quantitative research, it is the most logical method to determine common themes among the answers of the participants. According to Huberman and Miles (1994), "Data analysis is not off-the-shelf; rather, it is custom-built, revised and choreographed" (p. 33). Therefore, analysis methods that are logical for one researcher may not be beneficial to another researcher, although they may be using the same data collection methods.

Methods used included interview transcriptions, highlighting significant statements, or horizontalization and gathering meaning from these ideas and putting them into themes. I then used these three forms of data analysis and triangulation ensured that data saturation was reached.

For the individual interviews, I used audio recording since there was only be one participant and not several voices to decipher. I also used field notes. Within the field notes, I naturally sketched ideas in the margin. While sketching ideas in the margin of field notes seems elementary, it is a valid form of data analysis (Huberman & Miles, 1994). I read the transcriptions multiple times to get a sense of my entire database of information. This was a logical way of confronting the massive amounts of data that was collected. As Asmussen and Creswell (1995) did with their previous research, I found myself having to disregard questions which produced obvious answers in an effort to focus on the deeper meaning in the answers to other questions.

To bring the findings of all three of the data collection methods together, I began to interpret the data (Creswell, 2013). Interpreting the data involved organizing the prominent themes into larger units in an effort to draw out only the most relevant themes until data

saturation is achieved. I then linked my interpretation of the research to the larger theory that grounded my research, which is the transformational leadership theory (Burns, 1978). I plan analyzed all of the data manually, without the assistance of qualitative analysis software.

Trustworthiness

Lincoln and Guba (1985) simply refer to trustworthiness as "staying power." When discussing trustworthiness, Creswell (2013) spoke of "employing accepted strategies to document the accuracy of their studies" (p. 250). Documenting trustworthiness includes examining four characteristics of the study: credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility

Credibility indicates the study measures or tests what is actually intended. To establish credibility, I used strategies such as triangulation. Because I had four possible data collection methods, I was in pursuit of triangulation, which is the use of multiple sources, methods, investigators and theories to provide corroborating evidence (Creswell, 2013). I also documented that I used expert review to assure credibility in development of my research questions. Furthermore, I utilized member checks. In using member checks as a strategy, Creswell (2013) stated that the participants give their views regarding the credibility of the findings and interpretations. After conducting the research and analyzing the findings, I contacted all participants to obtain their views on the findings.

Dependability

Dependability indicates that, replicated as closely as possible in another study, similar results would be obtained can be established by member checks. In using member checks as a strategy, Creswell (2013) stated that the participants give their views regarding the credibility of

the findings and interpretations. After conducting the research and analyzing the findings, I contacted all participants to obtain their views on the findings. Additionally, after the research had been completed, each school district superintendent received a document with the research results, to share with individuals in the school division who are in a professional position to impart change and improvement, if needed.

Confirmability

Confirmability ensures as far as possible that the work's findings reflect the experiences and ideas of the informants, rather than the researcher. Triangulation promotes confirmability. To reduce the effect of investigator bias, I reviewed my role as the researcher with the participants. This helped them to clearly understand the process as well as understand my background and underlying motivation for completing this research. I chose to study this topic because of the personal knowledge I had regarding the subject matter. However, I had to remove all personal bias from the research using bracketing. Although I was a public school administrator and a former school district liaison, I could not allow my experiences to influence the outcome of the research. Creswell (2013) spoke of bracketing and how he has seen some researchers first tell their experience with the phenomenon, prior to setting aside their views in an effort to proceed with the experiences of others.

Transferability

After the research involved in the study, there was a "rich, thick description" (Creswell, 2013, p. 252) or context in which the data collected can be transferred to other studies. The descriptions in my writing are such that future researchers would be able to envision how my study can be the foundation for future studies. This research was made possible, in part because I was able to look at other studies and determine the gap in literature and the transferability to my

future research. As a researcher, I would be honored if another researcher were able to expand upon my research.

Ethical Considerations

There were multiple ethical considerations arose during the course of this research. My laptop at home, as well as my desktop computer, were password protected to ensure the security of any electronic data. To my knowledge, I was the only individual with access to my private password. Additionally, the file cabinet in my home office is locked. No one had access to the files.

I developed pseudonyms, not only for the participants of the interviews, but also for each of the school districts. When corresponding with my dissertation committee about specifics during data collection, I was mindful of pseudonyms and used them at all times. It would be difficult for anyone to determine the true identity of the school district or the professionals who participated in the research. There are 12 school districts in Region 5 of Virginia, as assigned by the Virginia Department of Education. However, only two of the 12 districts were used in the study, making it even more difficult to determine the true identity of the districts.

Since administrators at all levels in Central Virginia tend to know each other professionally, I did not discuss with any other administrator, the identity of the individuals involved in my research. This includes administrators within the school district where I work and personal friends who are school administrators. Confidentiality, in general was the highest priority during this research (See Appendix H). I did not want identity to be disclosed and information about any school district's shortcomings, if indicated in the results, to become common knowledge among other districts. I also owe it to the participants to hold their opinions and private disclosures with the highest levels of security possible.

Summary

In this chapter, I explained why my study is worthwhile to society, not only to me or to my small portion of the world. This is where I explained not only why I chose to study, and how I chose to perform the study. Related to why I chose to study the topic is the gap in literature, which was explained in this chapter. I found that gap by studying rural Virginia school personnel and their perceptions of both homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Act.

Furthermore, in this chapter, I explained the design I chose as the best to explore my topic. In this case, it was transcendental phenomenology. I believed the school personnel of rural Virginia needed to be heard. The world needs to understand what they know about homelessness, to be able to better serve students who are in need of stable housing. I also provided insight in this chapter related to the characteristics of the study participants, the study sites, and the study procedures.

I had the responsibility as a researcher to protect those who provided their time and information toward the completion of the study. Therefore, I outlined how their information was protected through the use of pseudonyms not only for the individuals, but for the school districts in which they are employed. I discussed methodology such as data collection, data analysis, and how I established validity, credibility, and dependability. An important aspect of a study is its ability to be transferable beyond the group or the area which was studied. I foresaw vast transferability in this study and it was also outlined in this chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental, phenomenological study was to describe the perceptions of public school personnel in two rural Central Virginia school divisions, related to homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVA). Through interviews, a review of journal prompts, and document analysis, triangulation was accomplished. In this chapter, theme development which emerged after a review of transcribed interviews is presented. I employed Moustakas's (1994) method of data analysis.

Data collection initially included asking broad questions of the participants about what they have experienced related to the phenomenon. The central research question and sub-questions guided this study and complied with this specification. I coded the responses of the participants and then noted the patterns or themes.

I used interviews, participants' journaling, and document analysis as forms of data to relay participant experiences. This ensured that triangulation was employed, until data saturation was reached. The views of the school division personnel in rural Virginia are detailed, including their preconceived ideas of homelessness, how rural homelessness compares to urban homelessness, and any experiences they have had with students experiencing the phenomenon of homelessness. Additionally, the school division personnel also shared any prior knowledge of homelessness they possessed and the resources from which it was obtained. The chapter is summarized at the conclusion, and the personnel's answers to the central research question and the two sub-questions are disclosed.

Participants

There were 10 school personnel participants representing two rural Central Virginia school divisions in this study. All participants worked full-time as either a teacher, reading specialist, school division registrar, guidance counselor, or school division homeless education liaison. The participants were recruited with the permission of the school division superintendent or designee. In both school divisions, the school division homeless liaison was the point of contact between researcher and school division personnel.

All personnel were employed full-time with a school division in rural Central Virginia, must have been employed in a position in which they interact directly with students, and were able to report concerns of a student experiencing homelessness, if necessary.

There were six participants representing Framingham County Public Schools, including four teachers, one registrar, and one elementary principal. Representing the neighboring county of Marlborough County Public schools was the homeless education liaison, a middle school counselor, and two classroom teachers. The years each employee worked in the field of education was categorized into the following increments: 0-4 years, 5-9 years, 10-14 years, 15-19 years, 20-24 years, 25-29 years, and those working over 30 years (Table 1). To protect participant privacy, all participant names were changed to pseudonyms, as well as the names of the counties in which they are employed. Table 1 describes the demographics of the personnel, including the ethnicity, gender, years working in the field of education, job title, and the grade level with which they work.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participant Male/Female	Ethnicity	School Division	Title/Grade Level	Years of Experience
Elizabeth (F)	African-American	Framingham	Teacher/Elementary	10-May
Nessa (F)	African-American	Framingham	Registrar/K-12	Over 30
Paigey (F))	African-American	Framingham	Principal/Elementary	25-30
Lora (F)	Caucasian	Marlborough	Teacher/Middle	15-Oct
Ruth (F)	African-American	Framingham	Teacher/Elementary	10-May
Helen (F)	Caucasian	Framingham	Teacher/Elementary	15-Oct
Logan (M)	Caucasian	Marlborough	District Homeless Liason	20-25
Gladys (F)	Caucasian	Framingham	Teacher/Elementary	15-Oct
Connie (F)	African-American	Marlborough	Reading Specialist/High School	25-30
James (M)	African-American	Marlborough	School Counselor/Middle	20-25

Elizabeth

Elizabeth is a 28-year-old female, African-American, first grade teacher who was employed by Framingham County Public Schools. She has been employed in the field of education for 5-9 years. Employment in this rural area has been Elizabeth's only teaching experience, other than her student teaching in Marlborough County. She is a native of Framingham County, Virginia, and currently lives within the county.

Nessa

Nessa is a female in her late 50s who serves as the registrar for Framingham County Public Schools. She is of African-American decent, a native of Framingham County, and has been employed by the same school division for 40 years. Prior to this employment, she did not work for any other school division or private school. Nessa was a lifelong resident of Framingham County at the time of this study.

Paigey

Paigey is the female principal of one of the lower-level schools in Framingham County. She is also a product of Framingham County Public Schools and graduated from the local high school in the division. There is a primary school for the youngest children and an elementary school that services students from 4th-5th grades. Paigey has been working with children and their families in some capacity of education for 25-29 years. Prior to working in this rural community for over a decade and returning to live in the county, Paigey began her career as a teacher in a suburban school division in a larger suburban area of Virginia.

Lora

Lora is a middle-aged, Caucasian female in her early 40s, who teaches various subjects to students in grades 5-7. She is a native of Marlborough county in which she teaches, and has

been working for this division for 10-14 years. Prior to beginning her career as a teacher, Lora worked in the corporate business arena.

Ruth

Ruth is an African-American, female teacher of primary grade-level students. Currently, she teaches kindergarten. Ruth has been teaching in the same school division for 5-10 years. She is also a native of Framingham County and graduated from the local high school.

Geneva

Geneva is a Caucasian female teacher in her mid-30s who has taught for Framingham County Public Schools for 10-14 years. This has been her only teaching experience. She has not worked in a suburban or urban area.

Logan

Logan holds multiple positions within Marlborough County Public Schools. Not only is he the homeless education liaison, as of two years ago, he also serves in an upper-level administrative role on the superintendent's executive team. He is a Caucasian male in his late 40s, who has been in education for 20-24 years. Logan currently lives in Marlborough County and graduated from the only high school in the county.

Gladys

Gladys is a female, Caucasian teacher in her mid-30s, who teaches the lower-level elementary grades in Framingham County. She has been employed in the career field of education for 10-14 years. Prior to living and working in Framingham County, she worked in a Southwestern Virginia county. Although many counties in this part of the state are rural, Gladys describes her previous school division as suburban.

Connie

Connie is currently a high school special education teacher, as well as a licensed Reading Specialist. She is an African-American female who is well-versed in topics related to homeless education, although she does not credit her current employers for contributing to any of her prior knowledge. She has been in education for 25-29 years. Previously, Connie worked for a school division in the south-central portion of Virginia. She considers the area to be urban, while some would describe it as suburban.

James

James proved to be the participant, not only with the longest interview time because of his wealth of knowledge, but also the participant with the most detailed insight on the topic of homeless education. Interestingly, he does not attribute his knowledge of the MVA or homeless education to his current employer, Marlborough County Public Schools. He has been employed as a guidance counselor for students in the middle grades, as well as a teacher in his early years right after graduation from college. James is an African-American male in his mid-to late 40s who has been an educator for 20-24 years

Results

Interviews, journal entries, and document analysis were the three sources of data collected for this research to address the research questions. The central research question for this study was: How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts, describe homelessness? The sub-questions for the research were:

(a) How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe their experience with homeless students?

(b) How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe their understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act?

As I synthesized and coded the data, three themes emerged. These themes seemed to encompass the perception of homelessness and the MVA, and the level of importance the participants perceived the phenomena of homelessness to have in their rural, Central Virginia school divisions. The participants also described their perceptions of how homelessness has been addressed within their school divisions.

Interviews

Interviews were the primary means of obtaining information and data collection for the study. The participants were extremely vocal and willing to share what they knew about homeless education, the MVA, and the phenomena of school-aged children experiencing homelessness. They also had an opportunity to provide documents for review that were related to any information they had received during formal training, particularly while employed in the rural school districts. Furthermore, participants provided information they use for professional development purposes if their role of responsibility involves sharing information with other personnel regarding homeless education.

Journaling

The participants had rich, thoughtful interviews, as well as journal entries. I provided them with journaling materials and with a journal prompt (Appendix E). Significant statements were gathered from the journal entries. However, the journal entries produced limited new information that had not been revealed during the 10-question interview with the participants. After the interviews, the participants were given up to two weeks to reflect and write journal entries.

Document Analysis

Regarding the third form of data collection, document analysis, there were limited

documents to review. However, these documents were reviewed thoroughly. An unexpected source of information was provided by one of the participants. Connie participated in professional development training, without any prompting from a school administrator. The school psychologist shared information regarding a seminar, sponsored by a non-profit organization, Youth Mental Health First Aid USA. Connie spoke very highly of the seminar and the information she received from it. She encouraged her administrators to allow other teachers to attend:

Connie shared that the workshop was on two consecutive school day sessions, so it was at least seven hours, 14 hours for two days. She shared that it was a program that her school psychologist found out about, and the entire school district had the opportunity to participate for becoming aware of things the students could be going through that may interrupt their academic learning, homelessness being one of the areas covered. After this professional development was completed, Connie sent an email to her administrator and also the superintendent and assistant superintendent expressing the wealth of knowledge she gained through this workshop, and highly recommended that all employees participate in the program.

Connie also provided printed information for me to review from the website of Youth Mental Health First Aid USA (www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org). According to the website information, brochures and teaching materials are only available to those individuals who are certified instructors of the Youth Mental Health First Aid 5-step method of handling adults and teens in mental health distress. After analyzing the general information available on the website, I learned the program is taught in person and little can be gleaned from any written documentation. This is not official training for homeless liaisons. However, it is clear there is a 5-step process used in this program to handle distressed mental health situations. Connie stated

that although the program does not focus on the many causes of mental health issues, it does

touch on some of them, including homelessness in teens and adults. This is how she stated she

received her training on homelessness:

In the methodology section of this study, I anticipated the school division liaison would

provide many forms of documentation and training materials for review. Although the homeless

liaison from Framingham County gave written permission to the IRB for personnel from the

rural county to participate in this research, she did not have time to participate when called upon.

She retired from the school division after over 30 years of service, during the time of this study.

The homeless liaison from Marlborough County Public Schools, Logan, was eager and willing to

participate in this research. He provided written consent to the Liberty University IRB for him

and others within the school division to participate. However, Logan did not provide any

documents to review. While he, as the homeless education liaison, did not have documents to

review, it was equally as interesting to learn that he has never provided any formal training to

anyone in his school division, related to the topics of homeless education or students

experiencing homelessness or the MVA. He has not participated in formal training himself,

although he is knowledgeable about some key aspects that a homeless liaison should know. He

has been self-taught through various avenues over the two years he has been in the role as

homeless education liaison. When asked if he was aware if there were any posters in the school

buildings, which state the educational rights of homeless students, he was unsure.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. § 11434a et

seq.1987, 2015) states school districts shall ensure that public notice of the educational rights of

homeless children and youths is disseminated in a manner and form understandable to the

parents and guardians of homeless children and youths, where such children and youths receive

services under this Act. Such services include shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens,.

When interviewing James, the veteran middle school guidance counselor, he assured me that

posters are in all of the Marlborough County Public Schools Guidance offices, with the name and

contact information of the homeless liaison posted (See Appendix I).

Only three to five schools exist in each participating county; therefore, I was also able to

either go to the schools to physically observe these documents or call to verify each school had

the posters and brochures in an area visible to parents. In the homeless liaison's absence, Nessa,

the registrar for Framingham County verified the division had several posters and brochures, and

the retired homeless liaison had ensured they were in each school within the division (See

Appendices I & J). The posters and brochures were available and should have been posted in

both English and Spanish. Some of the teachers had never noticed the posters or brochures.

Elizabeth, the first-grade teacher from Framingham County simply replied, "I haven't seen any,"

when asked if she had ever noticed in the school any information related to the MVA or

homeless education. One of the teachers who had noticed the information in passing, still was

unsure of its meaning. In Abby's journal, when referencing what she knew about MVA, she

wrote, "I haven't heard very much. There are posters hanging up in our school office with it and

I think it's a government program that offers benefits to children that are homeless." The

standard posters are available on many national homeless education organizations' websites.

They are also provided to school divisions each year by individual states.

Theme Development

I coded the transcripts of the participants' interview and then noted the patterns or

themes. Although counting codes is usually a strategy that is connected with quantitative

research, I believed it was the most logical method for determining common themes among the

answers of the participants. I used three forms of data to relay what the participants experienced. This ensured that triangulation was employed until data saturation was reached. Initial codes included 1) Although it is not their responsibility, school personnel cannot identify a homeless student; 2) Limited knowledge of homeless education stems from limited exposure, such as living in one area or working in one school division for many years; and 3) School personnel do not know resources or rights afforded to homeless students by of the MVA. Although the previously mentioned codes were evident, they were not representative of the most common codes and some could be condensed with other codes to form an overarching theme (Table 2). In this section, the prevalent emergent themes are detailed.

Theme 1: School Personnel in Rural Central Virginia Believe There is a Need for More Local Professional Development Related to Homeless Education.

One theme to emerge from this study was that All of the school personnel in non-homeless liaison roles believed there was a greater need for more professional development.

Table 2

Themes from Codes

Codes	Themes
Had not attended formal homeless education training. Never heard of the McKinney-Vento Act. Could not give not give a more detailed definition for homelessness, other than one similar to "a person who does not have a home".	School Personnel in Rural Central Virginia Believe There is a Need for More Local Professional Development Related to Homeless Education**.**
Never noticed any posters or brochures related to homeless education in their schools. The Guidance Counselor and Homeless Liaison were the only participants who perceived homelessness as being important to the school division.	School Personnel in Rural Central Virginia Do Not Believe Homelessness is Viewed as Important in Their School Divisions.

Could not identify their school division's homeless liaison.	
Never heard of MVA Participants in non-teaching positions within both school divisions had heard of the MVA Personnel in non-teaching roles could give at least one characteristic of the MVA definition of homelessness, other than the most obvious characteristic of not having a home	Rural School Division Personnel in Non-Teaching Positions are More Aware of Key Aspects of MVA and Legal Characteristics of Homelessness.

Only 3 out of 10 of teachers interviewed could describe any of the key aspects of homelessness, other than the fact that a homeless person does not have a home. The two teachers who were able to identify other characteristics of homelessness that are included in the legal definition within the MVA were only able to name one or two additional characteristics. Both Connie of Marlborough and Gladys of Framingham said that students could be considered homeless if they are living with another family member because they do not have a home of their own. Additionally, Connie mentioned that, "a homeless student could be sleeping in a vehicle." Both Connie and Gladys have had experiences teaching in school districts other than their current rural division. The remaining teachers have only taught in their current division. Connie and Gladys also differed from the other teachers in that they each had a unique experience. Connie, who had taught in a suburban area prior to working in Marlborough County, took the initiative to volunteer to attend a course in which she learned about homeless education. However, the focus of the training was not specifically about the MVA or homelessness. She stated:

> It was a program that our psychologist found out about, and the entire school district had
>
> the opportunity to participate so that you could become aware of things that the students

could be going through that may interrupt their academic learning, and homelessness was one of the areas that we covered.

On the other hand, Gladys, stated that she learned about homelessness when she actually accepted into her home one of her students and a sibling experiencing homelessness. She learned about some of the available resources. She also learned that the children were no longer considered to be homeless, once she obtained legal custody of them. Gladys stated:

I have had experience with students who have lived with family members. Actually, in one case, and the mother was kind of...like she was home for a while and then she would kind of disappear so the kids were kind of just all spread out, staying with whoever. Those kids, and actually two of those students, two of the sisters, actually ended up coming, and they stayed with me for four years. We had a family, there were nine children in that family. That's kind of what started it, worked out it ... One year, just seeing her come to school every day and she was staying with family members but she still wasn't being taken care of. Like her hair wasn't being done and washed and she wasn't being bathed and just noticing that. Then like I said, having had the older sister about five years prior, I kind of already knew the family and knew the situation. It was a five-minute conversation with mom; she had never met me before. She signed over, agreed to sign over custody. The only thing that I know about benefits is free lunch, maybe. The only reason I know this is because when, like I said, when those students were staying with me, the secretary at our school was trying to see if they would qualify under that act to receive free lunch. They didn't because they said that they had a place to stay and they were being provided for so they actually did not end up qualifying for anything under that.

Logan, spoke of how he chose to disseminate information to the school division

personnel, rather than provide formal training sessions. Although Logan had been working in

the field of education for 19 years, and as the school division's homeless liaison for the past two

years, he had not had an opportunity to attend any formal training. He was willing and ready to

assist school administrators and others if they contacted him for questions. When asked about

how he prepared himself for the role of homeless education liaison for his school division, he

had the following response:

> So, I went on DOE, read the regs, kind of familiarized myself with the regulations. There
>
> were a lot of new initiatives coming out with the homeless and different parameters with
>
> the homeless at that time. And so, I kind of self-taught it, myself. And I have an
>
> assistant that I work with and we work together collaboratively, so that, when issues
>
> come up, we address them. I will also say that the biggest help has been the team of
>
> people around me.

During my interview with the guidance counselor of Marlborough County, James, I asked

about the professional development activities regarding homeless education within the county.

James has been a counselor in Marlborough for over 19 years and spent 25 years in the field of

education. He said the following about the professional development in his county:

> I can't think of any. Yeah. I think it's been a while. We've had it, Cora, but it's been a
>
> while since we've had it. I want to say at least five, six years. We deal with it because as
>
> counselors, we deal directly with registration. Basically, McKinney-Vento it's an act
>
> where, what we need to know is that for [homelessness]. We cannot discriminate or
>
> enroll, cannot enroll a kid, based on the status of their homelessness. They have
>
> automatic, you know, if they can't prove, we give them so many days on the legal act to

try to provide residency, but we cannot...Like for example, if a kid is coming from

another county and their parents said that we are homeless, we cannot deny them

enrollment in our county.

James shared the following in his journal how he became knowledgeable about

homelessness:

I actually I got that in my grad studies. A portion of what we study as counselors, it's

almost like a resource class, like how to deal with different sets of people, of

homelessness, gay and.... We've dealt with a lot of things, and we touched on how to

give people the resources. How to deal with them informs the counseling end of it and

give parent resources. Even family, you know, how to help with the family to deal with

not only just the financial part of it, but the emotional part of it.

Theme 2: School Personnel in Rural Central Virginia Do Not Believe Homelessness is

Viewed as Important in Their School Divisions.

Theme number two emerged after all personnel, with the exception of the guidance

counselor and the homeless education liaison, indicated that they did not perceive homelessness

as being an important issue in their school division. Only 3 out of 10 of teachers could identify

their school division's homeless education liaison, and only 3 out of 10 can name two or fewer

resources that are available to students experiencing homelessness. Journal question number two

was as follows: Do you believe homelessness is considered a serious issue in your school

community? Has there been an appropriate amount of attention brought to the issue? Paigey,

the elementary principal in Framingham wrote the following reflection in her journal:

Homelessness exists. I do feel that more attention needs to be brought to it. It is a

traumatic event in a child's life and school personnel need to be equipped with the proper

knowledge to help them him or her be successful.

Helen, an elementary teacher from Framingham, shared the following in her journal

entry:

> I do not feel that homelessness is considered a serious issue in this area. Most of the
> time, these families will stay with friends or family members as opposed to staying on the
> street. Due to this, attention is not brought to the situations in which some families may
> be living. I have been teaching in this district for 12 years and I have never received any
> type of training or education on homelessness. There are posters posted with information
> about the McKinney-Vento Act, but attention is not brought to them.

Ruth, a kindergarten teacher in Framingham, expressed the same sentiment as her peers

in her journal entry, regarding her perception of the importance of homelessness and homeless

education in Framingham. She documented:

> Homelessness is a serious issue in the community, but I don't think there is a lot of
> attention to it covered at school. I know that we can go to the guidance counselor at
> school if we suspect anything, but we have not had any training to identify homelessness.

Lora, the middle school educator from Marlborough, pointedly shared the following in

her journal entry. "Homelessness is not considered to be a serious issue in our school. The

training we receive is limited."

Both the middle school guidance counselor and the homeless education liaison were from

Marlborough County Public Schools. James, the guidance counselor, expressed in his journaling

that he felt the school division treated homelessness with seriousness. Concurring, Logan, the

homeless liaison from the same division, seemed confident during his interview about his system

of disseminating information about homelessness education, when needed. Ironically, the

guidance counselor and the liaison would usually be in two of the traditional roles in a school

district that could be responsible for providing other staff members with training on the topic of

homeless education. Connie, a 26-year veteran educator in Marlborough County, who has

previously worked in a suburban setting, said the following when asked if she had received any

formal training on homeless education in her current school division.

James, the guidance counselor for Marlborough County Public Schools is extremely

knowledgeable about homeless education. He believes the school division considers

homelessness to be a serious issue and conveys this sentiment to the school community.

However, he does acknowledge that there is room for improvement. He related the following

information in his journal entry:

> Homelessness is a serious issue for our community and schools. Sometimes we don't
>
> always know the extent of who is homelessness; therefore, it is hard for us to intervene.
>
> Anytime children are displaced by no fault of their own, it is a serious issue. As a school
>
> system, we try to assist our students in many different ways. Homelessness affects
>
> students' attendance, learning the curriculum, and emotional state. Our school system
>
> appropriately gives attention to the issue of homelessness. But it can be improved in
>
> many ways. When communication between schools and families are more effective, the
>
> appropriate resources can be given. Our schools try to allocate funds, request donations
>
> from the community to assist families. At the same time, guidance and counseling
>
> services are given to students who are going through homelessness. The emotional well-
>
> being is just as important in servicing families experiencing homelessness.

**Theme 3: Rural School Division Personnel in Non-Teaching Positions are More Aware of
Key Aspects of MVA and Legal Characteristics of Homelessness.**

The third theme to emerge from the interviews was that the participants in teaching roles knew significantly less about homelessness, and specifically rural homelessness, and the legal definition of homelessness than those participants in non-teaching roles. Only 3 out of 10 of teachers could identify their school division's homeless education liaison, while only 3 out of 10 could name two or fewer resources that are available to students experiencing homelessness. Only one of the teachers, Gladys of Framingham County Public Schools was able to name the homeless liaison in her county. She once again attributed this to the fact that she had accepted students who were once homeless into her home. Only 3 out of 10 of the teachers, one from each school division were able to properly identify common resources or benefits available to students who are currently without a stable home. The teachers were Lora and Gladys. Gladys was once again confident in her answer, although not detailed. Gladys, when speaking of the two students she took into her home with her family, stated:

> The only thing that I know of is free lunch, maybe. The only reason I know this is
> because when, like I said, when those students were staying with me, the secretary at our
> school was trying to see if they would qualify under that act to receive free lunch.

She went on to say that they later found that the children did not qualify because they had found a stable home with Gladys' family and were then no longer considered homeless.

Gladys mentioned a resource that was mentioned by no other participant: the opportunity for the child to attend his or her school of origin with the transportation assistance of both the school division of origin and the new school division. She stated:

> I know that if it's brought to the administrators' attention that a child is homeless, then
> the school has to provide transportation so that child gets to and from school. I know
> that...I don't know of anything that would be a legal obligation of the school. I would

think the school would get involved with social services to try to figure out what's going on and why the child or the family is homeless.

When interviewed, Geneva of Framingham County had a profound answer when asked to explain her perception of homelessness, in her own words. Geneva's ideas spoke to the notion that many rural Americans may relate urban and rural homelessness as being synonymous:

> In my mind, I think of homelessness as when you go to a big city and you see someone sleeping on the streets or underneath the bridges. That's what I think of when I hear "homelessness." And thankfully, I have never had to teach any student that...you know, being in Framingham, we don't really see that much of homelessness. Really, honestly, I don't know of anyone that has been actually homeless here in the county… I mean, that's what I think of. I can remember when I was in middle school, we had took a trip to Maryland and that was...you saw lots and lots of homeless people on the streets, begging for money and...you know, of course, we go to Charlottesville now and you see people on the streets, saying that they're homeless and they're begging for money, but I'm not quite sure that that's the real deal.

Research Questions Answered

Central Question

The central question focusing the research was: How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts, describe homelessness? Only 2 out of 10 of the rural school personnel participants had received any formal training related to homeless education. When asked during the interview how they would describe homelessness, only 3 out of 10 of all participants could give a detailed description of homelessness beyond the basic idea that to be homeless means someone does not have a home, which is indicated in the word itself. The majority of the

participants gave answers such as the one that was given by Elizabeth, who has been teaching for eight years for Framingham County Public Schools. During her interview, she mentioned that she had worked with a homeless student. Someone had told her the student was homeless. She mentioned that her mother was a school employee of over 30 years, who was heavily involved with homeless education students. Yet, when she was asked for her perspective on homelessness in a rural area, she replied, "It can be very wide-ranged. Anyone who does not have their own home can be considered homeless."

Gladys, also of Framingham County Public Schools, is the teacher who was able to bring two students experiencing homelessness into her home. When asked for her perception of homelessness, she was the only teacher of the participants from both counties who was able to provide a more descriptive answer. She said that the experience of having the homeless sisters in her home helped her learn a lot as she researched what benefits they could receive. Her response included the following:

> I would say it would be families or individuals who do not have their own space to live, whether it be that they're living...I know like in extreme cases, on the streets or in their car but even sometimes just staying with family. In rural areas, I think a lot of times they're staying with other people, where they're bouncing from one friend or family's house to another friend's or family's house.

The other teachers' responses were very similar. Lora's answer, for example, was a variation of Elizabeth's. She said "I would describe homelessness as any child or any person who does not have a current address residence." She did go on to include that it could include a student who is no longer welcomed in their home by a parent or guardian and was asked to leave.

Sub-Questions

Sub-question 1. This first sub-question guiding this study was, How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe their experience with homeless students? As previously stated, Gladys had a direct experience with a student experiencing homelessness in her class and later invited the student and her sister to live with her family. She was unable to accept all of the siblings in the large family, but the mother of the family did not hesitate to give the teacher temporary custodial authority of the children. The overwhelmed parent welcomed the assistance.

All of the teachers, except for two, believed they have had an interaction with a homeless student at some point in their career. Yet, simultaneously, they are not well-versed on all the aspects of homelessness. The majority of participants who stated they had experienced working with a student with homelessness said that they knew the students were homeless because another person told them. They did not personally identify the student as homeless or have any direct responsibility for reporting the student as experiencing homelessness. Of all the participants in the study, only Gladys, Connie—the Reading Specialist who received training outside of the school division—James, the guidance counselor, and Paigey—the elementary principal—reported having to actually report a student as suspected of being homeless during their career in education.

Sub-question 2. The second sub-question guiding this study was: How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe their understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act? When asked this question during the interview, 5 out of 10 of the participants stated they had heard of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, named for two U.S. senators, Stewart McKinney and Bruce Vento. It was interesting to note that of the 5 participants, only 1was in an instructional role. Only one teacher of six total teacher participants had heard of the

MVA in their educational careers. Oddly, this teacher was Connie, the high school teacher and Reading Specialist who had attended an outside training, which included information on the phenomenon of children experiencing homelessness. She does not recall the training specifically citing the McKinney-Vento Act as a reference or resource. Although Paigey, the elementary teacher, and Nessa, the school division registrar with Framingham County Public Schools, had both heard of the McKinney-Vento Act, they were not able to speak about many aspects of it in detail. James, the guidance counselor, and Logan, the division homeless liaison, both with Marlborough County Public Schools, were most knowledgeable about the MVA, with having little formal training in James' situation or no formal training, as with Logan.

Summary

In conclusion, the purpose of this study was to learn the answers to the central question and two sub-questions. The central question was: How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts, describe homelessness? The first sub-question was: How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe their experience with homeless students? The second sub-question was: How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe their understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act? After interviewing 10 participants from two rural school divisions in Central Virginia, along with synthesizing information from detailed journal entries and document analysis of items viewed at each school division, related to homeless education, I learned the perceptions of this sample of rural school division employees. I was able to identify three main themes and three primary codes associated with each theme. The first theme was that there is a perception among the employees that there is a need for more professional development related to homeless education. Only 2 out of 10 of the participants had received any formal training. The homeless liaison participating in the study was actually self-

taught regarding the various legal aspects of homeless education via the state website for homeless education. He did not cite a reason for his lack of training. However, he appeared be very confident in his self-paced learning and was able to verbalize basic information related to paperwork and characteristics of homelessness, in general. Two participants noted during the interview that they had participated in what they called formal training on homeless education. It was not the official training offered by Project HOPE-Virginia, the office of Patricia Popp, State Director. However, the middle school guidance counselor, James, said he learned about homelessness in his graduate school classes, and Connie, a high school teacher and Reading Specialist, said she volunteered to attend a day seminar in which she learned not only about homelessness, but about other social issues affecting children and available resources.

The second theme was the idea that homelessness is not viewed as an important issue within the school divisions of Framingham or Marlborough County Public Schools. There were only two participants who viewed the issue as important. They were the two who most likely work with the issue the most because of the nature of their roles in the school division. Both James, the guidance counselor, and Logan, the homeless education liaison of the same school division, Marlborough County, viewed homelessness and being an important issue to the school division. The other participants noted that some of them could not identify their local homeless liaison, and 7 out of 10 had never seen any information related to homeless education posted in their school buildings. In Framingham County, the participants who noted they were given information on resources for social issues in the past said it was distributed by the school division psychologist and not the homeless education liaison. Additionally, the information was not focused solely on the phenomenon of homelessness.

A third theme was gleaned from this study. The theme was that rural school division

personnel in non-teaching positions were more aware of key aspects of MVA and legal characteristics of homelessness than those in teaching positions. All of the participants in non-teaching roles from both school divisions (All) had heard of the McKinney-Vento Act, while only 1 out of 6 of teachers from both school districts combined, had previously known about the law.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how school district personnel in two rural Virginia school districts perceived the phenomenon of homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act (MVA). Participants in this study included teachers, school administrators, registrars, counselors, and homeless liaisons. The central question and two sub-questions delved into the perceptions of school personnel employed in the two specified rural school divisions in regards to homelessness. The questions also explored perceptions and understanding of the MVA and of experiences with students who meet the legal definition of homelessness.

In this chapter, the findings are reviewed and summarized. Further discussion will address the relationship between the empirical and theoretical literature upon which this research was based. This transcendental phenomenological study was based upon Burn's (1978) theory of transformational leadership. The theoretical, practical, and empirical implications of this study is conveyed in this final chapter. As with any research, there were delimitations that were imposed purposely, as well as limitations, over which I had no control. Both are outlined prior to explaining the recommendations for future research, which includes the possibility of combining forces with a notable university professor who was cited often during this research and expressed a sincere interest in this study. Finally, there was a summary, as a culmination of the contents of this chapter.

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how school personnel in the public, rural Central Virginia school divisions of Framingham and Marlborough counties perceive the phenomenon of homelessness and the MVA. The 10

participants in this study included teachers, school administrators, registrars, counselors, and homeless liaisons from the two different school divisions. Moustakas's (1994) data analysis procedures were applied. Through interviews, a review of journal prompts, and professional development document analysis, triangulation was accomplished. Three themes emerged through analysis of data collected.

Theme 1: School Personnel in Rural Central Virginia Believe There is a Need for More Local Professional Development Related to Homeless Education.

During analysis, initial codes emerged from the data. Ultimately, three prevalent themes emerged. Teachers in both school divisions expressed a need for more professional development related to homelessness. Data indicated that many participants had never been formally educated on the topic by officials within their school division. Other than the homeless education liaison, only 2 out of 10 participants had attended formal training. One-third of the participants could not define homelessness beyond the fact that a person who does not have a home is considered to be homeless. Half of the research participants had never heard of the MVA.

Theme 2: School Personnel in Rural Central Virginia Do Not Believe Homelessness is Viewed as Important in Their School Divisions.

Once again, teachers and those in non-administrative roles had varying opinions in relation to administrators or those in a position to facilitate professional development sessions, such as the guidance counselor. The majority of classroom teachers did not perceive homelessness as being an important issue within their school division or that upper-level administrators viewed it as an important issue. However, the counselor and homeless liaison from Marlborough both expressed, in their interviews, journal activities, and document analysis of informational material posted at schools, that the school division saw the issue of homeless

education of adequate importance. Although they acknowledged there were no official professional development opportunities related to homeless education offered to school personnel in Marlborough, they maintained the solid perception that the school division administration views homelessness as an important issue.

Theme 3: Rural School Division Personnel in Non-Teaching Positions are More Aware of Key Aspects of MVA and Legal Characteristics of Homelessness.

During the face-to-face interviews, as well as in the journal documents, the counselor, principal, registrar, and the homeless liaison were able to identify more aspects of the MVA than the teacher-participants in the study. Only 1 out of 6 of teacher-participants in both divisions had heard of MVA. Every participant, All, in non-teaching positions within both school divisions, had heard of the MVA. Personnel in non-teaching roles could give at least one characteristic of the MVA definition of homelessness, other than the most obvious characteristic of not having a home.

Central Research Question:

Three research questions guided the study. The central question was: How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts, describe homelessness? Only 3 out of 10 of teachers interviewed could describe any of the key aspects of homelessness, other than the fact that a homeless person does not have a home. This could be attributed to the fact that 8 out of 10 of the participants had never received any formal training related to homeless education, either through their school divisions or through outside sources. The second theme identified aligns with this central research question: School personnel in rural Central Virginia do not believe homelessness is viewed as important in their school divisions. Furthermore, in the second theme, it was determined that school personnel in rural Central Virginia do not believe

homelessness is viewed as important in their school divisions; therefore, their experience with homeless students has been somewhat limited. This is, in part, due to the fact that without professional development and their perception that homelessness is not important in the school division, the participants have not had an adequate opportunity to be able to properly recognize a student experiencing homelessness.

Sub-question 1. The first sub-question was: How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe their experience with homeless students? The teachers, with exception of two, stated that they have worked with at least one homeless student or a student they believed may have been homeless. Yet, they are not well-versed on all the aspects of homelessness. Most of the study participants admitted that they only believed the students they referred to were homeless because a colleague informed them the student may be homeless. They did not personally identify the student as homeless or have any direct responsibility for reporting the student as experiencing homelessness. This sub-question is aligned with the first theme: School personnel in rural Central Virginia believe there is a need for more local professional development related to homeless education. All school personnel who were interviewed for this study reported that there is a need for more professional development in their school divisions, related to the topics of homelessness and the MVA. The participants who were school administrators, as well as the counselor, concurred with the staff and classroom school personnel on this matter in both school divisions.

Sub-question 2. The second and last sub-question to be answered as a result of this research was: How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe their understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act? Exactly half of the participants had never heard of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act. Of those, only 2 out of 10, or the one participant

who reported having previously heard of the law was a classroom teacher. The one participant held dual roles as a teacher and Reading Specialist. She had received training from an outside seminar and not through the school division. Both Paigey, the elementary school teacher, and Nessa, the school division registrar, stated they had heard of the MVA. However, they were not able to verbalize any aspects of the law. James, the guidance counselor, and Logan, the division homeless liaison, both with Marlborough County Public Schools, were most knowledgeable about the MVA, with having little formal training in James's situation, or no formal training as with Logan. Both were able to identify the purpose of the MVA and the primary points, including the population the law was designed to benefit, the roles that are clarified in the law, such as the role of the homeless liaison, and the fact that the MVA gives the legal definition of homelessness as a guideline for school division personnel. As stated above, the rural school division participants in non-teaching roles were able to identify more detailed aspects of homelessness, as outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act. This was the third theme identified.

Discussion

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to understand how school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts perceive the phenomenon of homelessness and the MVA. Participants in this study included teachers, reading specialists, school administrators, registrars, counselors and homeless liaisons. In Chapter 2, there was an extensive review of the existing literature related to the topic the MVA, homeless education, and the perceptions of school personnel in rural Central Virginia. Many of the prior studies on rural homelessness were conducted in Australia. For example, Chamberlain and Johnson (2013) focused on how the pathway to homelessness, such as family issues, drug issues, or financial issues, impacted the duration of the individual's time without a permanent home. Canfield,

Teasley, Abell, and Randolph (2012) conducted a study at a professional conference in the Midwestern part of the United States. The research participants were school social workers from various parts of the Midwest. The research was done because the authors could not find any studies related to the roles and responsibilities of homeless liaisons, who are also school social workers responsible for implementing the benefits of the MVA. Canfield et al. also found a gap in the literature related to studies of homelessness in rural areas of all parts of the United States. Studies had been conducted in urban areas and other areas of the country with school social workers, but research had not been completed to examine the perceptions of school personnel in settings such as rural Central Virginia. In the search of the peer-reviewed literature for this study, an empirical gap in the literature on this topic was found, as it relates to homelessness in rural America. The results of this research provided information to support other studies, as well as corroborate the need for expansion of existing research. In this section, the results of this study were tied to results of other research on the topic.

Theme 1. School Personnel in Rural Central Virginia Believe There is a Need for More Local Professional Development Related to Homeless Education.

During analysis, initial codes emerged from the data. Teachers in both school divisions expressed a need for more professional development in this area. Chamberlain and Johnson (2013) identified five pathways to homelessness: housing crisis, family breakdown, substance abuse, mental health issues, and the youth-to-adult pathway. They believe this pathway can occur when homeless youths are still homeless at the point in which they turn into an adult. The research of Chamberlain and Johnson and the pathways they have identified can be recommended to school divisions as part of professional development in educating personnel on what can eventually be the plight of homeless students if they are not identified early by

educating school personnel properly. Chamberlain and Johnson specifically chose the term "pathways" to describe how a person can enter a cycle of homelessness because "there can be pathways out of homelessness" (p. 61).

According to Havlik, Brady, and Gavin (2014), participants often mentioned including and educating parents, so they can better support their children emotionally. One participant suggested that student/parent awareness of rights and accommodations under the Homeless Act is important for parents to learn how to optimally advocate for their children. A counselor participant in the current study suggested that schools "provide parents with a list of social/services/resources." This study further supported the results of Havlik et al.. As school counselors, the participants in the study expressed extreme consciousness about the needs of educating parents and supporting students who are identified as homeless. However, it is not stated in the research that the school counselors acknowledged the need to further educate and provide professional development support for faculty and staff within their school divisions, which could only enhance the efforts of the counselors if other staff members were more informed about the MVA and homeless education. In this study the school counselor, administrator, and non-classroom school personnel appeared content with their own knowledge, while not expressing an immediate need to share the knowledge widely throughout the school division with other personnel.

Theme 2. School Personnel in Rural Central Virginia do not Believe Homelessness is Viewed as Important in Their School Divisions.

Teachers and those in non-administrative roles had varying opinions in relation to administrators or those in a position to facilitate professional development sessions, such as the guidance counselor. The counselor and homeless liaison from Marlborough, based on their

interviews and journal activity, expressed that the school division saw the issue of homeless education of adequate importance. They both acknowledged that there were no professional development opportunities related to homeless youth offered to the faculty and staff of the school division. Nevertheless, they continued to say they perceived the school division administration as viewing homelessness as an important issue. Logan, the homeless liaison, expressed satisfaction with the manner in which he made himself available for questions and the way staff appeared comfortable stopping him when they saw him to ask a question about homeless education when a question arose. He said he would always stop to answer the question. His availability and willingness to answer questions and be a resource to school officials when needed, seemed to him to be sufficient as an indicator to others that the school division administration viewed homelessness as an important issue. Most classroom teachers did not perceive homelessness as being an important issue within their school division, nor that upper-level administrators viewed it as an important issue. Therefore, it was difficult for them to adequately describe their experiences with homeless students, or to believe that homelessness was important, since many had never been given an opportunity for professional development related to homeless education. Meanwell (2012) acknowledged that studies on homelessness typically focused on individuals in urban areas and those who were afforded the opportunities to have shelters, soup kitchens, and other resources. Individuals experiencing rural homelessness often do not have this type of widespread daily assistance, in part, because rural homelessness is often not as visible and obvious to the community.

Grant, Gracy, Goldsmith, Shapiro, and Redlener (2013) sought to determine how far the system of understanding of homelessness had evolved over the last 25 years. Grant et al. pointed out that homelessness was never discussed as being a problem in rural areas of the United States.

Instead, the article referred to large cities such as Boston, Massachusetts; Washington, D.C.; and New York, New York, when noting the increase in homelessness for children and families in those areas. This supports the reasoning that research related to the perception of rural homelessness is important (Grant et al., 2013).

Results of research have shown a correlation between homelessness and lack of school success (Rahman, Turner, & Elbedour, 2015). To demonstrate, over half of homeless students scored below grade level in reading and math (NCFH 2012). Homeless youth also displayed higher frequencies of developmental delays and deviant behaviors (Rahman et al., 2015). These findings highlight a need to improve teacher awareness of the effects of homelessness, both through district initiatives and professional development. The results of the current study highlighted the fact that participants in the target districts lacked knowledge of homelessness and did not view it as a problem in their area. Furthermore, while homeless youth are not able to build or institutionalize support networks and structures needed, they are able to utilize available support systems within their surroundings (Rahman et al, 2015).

Theme 3. Rural School Division Personnel in Non-Teaching Positions are More Aware of Key Aspects of MVA and Legal Characteristics of Homelessness.

During the face-to-face interviews, as well as in the journal documents, the counselor, principal, registrar, and the homeless liaison were able to identify more aspects of the MVA than the teacher-participants in the study. Rahman et al. (2015) wrote one of the rare articles, critiquing the United States' federal initiatives which focus on homelessness. They looked at federal policies designed to address the needs of homeless youth. They also studied the long-term effects the policies had on improving the lives of homeless youth. Rahman et al. focused their study on the perception of school counselors regarding the needs of students experiencing

homelessness. The counselors' responses were geared toward the needs of the students and their

families as they related to homelessness and services that were needed. Therefore, the

counselors from urban, suburban, and rural areas noted ideas for educating parents more and

providing resources to them. The study by Rahman et al. began with the assumption that school

counseling programs today are comprehensive and address the needs of homeless students.

Therefore, Rahman et al. aligned with the idea of the third theme, which stated that school

personnel in non-teaching roles are more aware of key aspects of MVA and legal characteristics

of homelessness.

Rahman et al. (2015) never asked the counselors about any prior knowledge of the MVA

or homeless education. However, they stated "the perspective of the school counselor – a

valuable yet often overlooked vantage point – offers a useful layer of insight with which to better

inform school-based approaches targeting students' needs" (Rahman et al., 2015, p. 4). The

study did not focus on the counselor's knowledge of the MVA or homeless education, in general.

The study, using the survey instrument known as the Knowledge and Skills with Homeless

Students Survey (KSHSS) was created by Gaenzle and Bryan (2013). The quantitative survey

asked them to describe the needs of homeless students, in the areas of academics, personal needs,

social needs, and career planning needs.

In stating the results of their research, Rahman et al. (2015) found that without clear,

structured support, homeless youth are at high risk of failure in school. However, federal

programs are in place to mitigate these issues. For these programs to be sustainable and

successful, strategic efforts must be in place to monitor knowledge and implementation. Since

the results of this current study showed that many non-administrative staff can identify the key

aspects of the MVA, the most forward of all federal initiatives on homelessness, it is implied that

there is a severe need to educate and inform non-administrative school division personnel on the federal initiatives.

In 2012, Canfield et al. studied the perception of knowledge and awareness regarding the MVA of social workers in the mid-western section of the United States. A 26-item instrument called the McKinney-Vento Act Implementation Scale (MVAIS) was used to survey 201 social workers who attended a conference. Canfield et al. asserted that knowledge regarding the MVA was rated an overall score of "low" on the MVAIS scale when the social workers, of whom many were assigned to be the homeless liaisons for their school districts, were surveyed, using the MVAIS. Although the studies of Rahman et al. (2015) and this research showed that participants in non-teaching roles knew more about the MVA or were perceived to know more, as with Rahman et al., Canfield et al. showed that social workers in the mid-west who serve in dual roles, including serving as the school district's homeless liaison, did not rate as knowing an extensive amount about the MVA. However, it would not be known from the study if they know more or less about the MVA, when compared to the classroom school personnel in their local school divisions.

Implications

The results of this study revealed theoretical, empirical, and practical implications that were discussed in this section. The implications can benefit the rural Central Virginia community, the school personnel in rural Central Virginia, and its school division administrators. The study was also done to assist school administrators in future planning of professional development activities related to homeless education.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical framework used for this study was Burns's (1978) theory of

transformational leadership. Transformational leaders, as Burns envisioned , have a clear

understanding of the organization's and team's goals and are able to express them effectively.

The manner in which the transformational leader conveys the vision of the organization is done

in such a way in which it becomes contagious. Therefore, the employees or the group being led

become more invested in pursuing the vision for the advancement of the organization. Burns

also believed that leaders are not born or made, and transformational leadership occurs when one

person purposely engages another to exchange something of value, such as knowledge. Six

years after Burns developed the Theory of Transformational Leadership, Bernard Bass (1985)

expanded upon it by coining four key aspects of a transformational leader: *individual*

consideration or focusing on the needs of an individual member of the organization; *intellectual*

stimulation or the state in which the leader challenges members of the group to become involved

in a task; *inspiration* or the act of giving meaning or motivation for engaging in a focus; and

idealized influence, which includes the leader modeling the way for the followers.

In the participating districts, those in leadership positions were more knowledgeable

about homelessness than those in staff positions—teachers. Furthermore, those participants who

indicated that homelessness was not an issue of importance in the district, had low levels of

knowledge about homeless. Participants in non-leadership roles also reported the need for more

professional development. Specifically, all of the participating teachers in both divisions did not

believe homelessness was taken as a serious issue in their communities. This perspective

supports the conclusion that transformational leadership was not evident to the school personnel

within the organizations. They did not perceive the plight of homelessness as being perceived by

leaders as an important issue in rural Central Virginia. Therefore, the results of this study

revealed a need for more transformational leadership with respect to knowledge of homelessness

in this district. In the two school divisions of Marlborough and Framingham, and in rural school divisions everywhere, school leadership teams can use the four methods developed by Bass (1985) to communicate more effectively with faculty and staff the importance of identifying children experiencing homelessness, thus building trust in believing what they find to be worthwhile causes for education. Administrators taking interest in educational staff as individuals, and not only for what they can do for the schools, may add depth to the professional relationship and create more buy-in for a common cause such as homeless education.

If administrators and those in positions of leadership within a school division view homelessness as a serious issue and provide more professional development, the outcomes may be affected. Results may heighten higher-level administrators' awareness for proper transformational leadership. If this transpires, the professional development needs of the faculty and staff of the school division are more likely to be addressed and the school personnel could become more connected to the problem of homelessness.

Empirical Implications

Three major themes emerged through the results of this study. School personnel in rural Central Virginia perceived they needed more professional development related to homeless education. Furthermore, school personnel did not believe homelessness is viewed as important in their school divisions. Finally, school division personnel in non-teaching positions are more aware of key aspects of the MVA and legal, education definition of homelessness. Because of this research, administrators in the two school divisions were able to review the perceptions of the school employees and understand their professional development needs. They were able to better understand the participants' perception of the degree of seriousness to which they believe the administrators in the school division give the plight of homelessness. None of the classroom

teachers believed the issue is taken seriously or that much emphasis is placed on homelessness. Therefore, homelessness could become more of a focal issue to be promoted as a learning topic throughout both school divisions.

Canfield et al. (2012) studied the perceived knowledge and awareness of social workers in the mid-western section of the United States regarding the MVA. Canfield et al. had 201 social workers who attended a conference participated in their study by completing a survey, using a 26-item instrument called the McKinney-Vento Act Implementation Scale (MVAIS). Canfield et al. found that many of the social workers, who were the homeless liaisons for their school districts, were lacking in knowledge regarding the MVA.

School social workers were also the focus of another study on homelessness and the MVA, conducted by Jozefowicz-Simbeni & Israel (2006). In their study, Jozefowicz-Simbeni and Israel asked social workers about their perceptions of how they could become more involved in the implementation of the MVA, but did not ask about their prior knowledge of the MVA or their perceptions of homelessness.

In the research of Havlik et al. (2014) only 24% of the school counselors participating were from rural areas. This was the lowest demographic representation, compared to counselors from urban and suburban areas. Although the counselors cited supportive relationships among counselors, parents, peers, and other school personnel as significant socio-emotional needs for students to ensure they feel supported and connected (Havlik et al., 2014), there was no mention of educating their colleagues such as teachers and key staff who are in a position to identify homeless families. The education of other school personnel may prove to be an important missing link for the future success of students experiencing this phenomenon.

The parents and students who are experiencing homelessness or those who are unsure of

the importance of homeless education may be able to benefit from this study. The results of this study may increase public and school awareness about homeless education. With greater attention, given to this issue, more informational materials may be made available at the school-level, beyond what is already required to be posted in a visible location, according to the MVA.

Practical Implications

The first implication, which emerged from this study was the school employees' desire to learn more about homeless education if additional professional development were to be offered in their division. This sentiment was expressed by of all of the participants in non-administrative roles or roles that would not be responsible for educating others regarding the MVA and related topics in which participants expressed interest in learning more about homeless education after participating in this study. Therefore, a recommendation for practice would be for school divisions to incorporate training on homeless education and the MVA into orientation sessions for all new teachers. Another implication is the belief that the school division administration takes the issue of homelessness and educating the personnel too lightly, without the seriousness it deserves. As a result of the ESSA (The McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.1987, 2015), the role of school division liaisons has been more clearly defined to state that homeless education liaisons are now required to attend professional development, conducted by Project Hope-VA. This mandate should have a positive impact on accountability for homeless liaisons to receive accurate training and training other school personnel.

One of the interview questions specifically addressed the personnel's perception of how their school's administration viewed the seriousness of the phenomenon of homelessness. A final implication was that some participants appeared bothered that they did not have the knowledge of the MVA and the plight of rural homelessness they felt they should have as school

personnel.

Delimitations and Limitations

One delimitation of this study was that all the participants in the study must have been in a position to have an opportunity to work directly with students and to identify them as homeless or to interact with parents. Another delimitation was the geographic area. I wanted to concentrate this research on rural Central Virginia school divisions only. Additionally, the school division could not include any division in which I was currently employed or have been previously employed. This helped to eliminate bias, both intentional and implicit from the study.

Additionally, all participants in this study were natives of Virginia. Throughout the course of interviews, I gathered that they were all raised in the Commonwealth of Virginia. This would be a delimitation because the participants did not grow up in an area where they would regularly see what one would think of as urban, stereotypical homelessness. This promoted a more authentic perspective of school personnel in rural Central Virginia. Although not all were from rural Central Virginia, none were raised in urban areas such as the Tidewater area of Virginia or Northern Virginia, near Washington, D.C. One participant was from a suburban area in the mountainous region of Southwest Virginia, which boarders many rural areas.

There were a few limitations in this study, which may impact the findings or the ability to generalize. The researcher has substantial experience in the phenomenon, so bias may have been present. Although bracketing was used, this may still have been a limitation. A journal should have been maintained to document how the strategies were used throughout the research. Through strategies such as intentionally refraining from interrupting participants during interviews, not correcting them if they provided inaccurate perceptions of homelessness and refocusing thoughts to the words of the participate only, I sought to not have my prior experience

influence the research. Another limitation was include the number of participants involved in the study. The intention was to employ more than 10 participants, but only 10 agreed to assist with the research. Although the school division representatives distributed information about the survey to qualified employees of the entire school division through supervisors, not many replied. Some stated that as school personnel, they did not have the time to write a journal entry or to do a personal interview with 10 open-ended questions.

The researcher has substantial experience in the phenomenon, so bias may have been present. Although bracketing was used, this may still have been a limitation. A journal should have been maintained to document how the strategies were used throughout the research. Through strategies such as intentionally refraining from interrupting participants during interviews, not correcting them if they provided inaccurate perceptions of homelessness and refocusing thoughts to the words of the participate only, I sought to not have my prior experience influence the research.

Another limitation to note is that most participants were teachers of elementary education. This presented a limitation that could have been eliminated with more teachers from the middle school and high school levels. The participants' limited knowledge of the phenomenon under study was also a limitation. A more knowledgeable sample may have yielded different findings. Limiting the study was also the fact that only one of two liaisons participated in the study. The liaison who participated had only served in the position two years.

Recommendations for Future Research

This study covered an important gap in the literature, which gave a voice to the school personnel and school personnel of two rural Virginia school divisions. Until the time of this study, no one had formally studied the perceptions of Central Virginia school employees and

their perception of homelessness, their knowledge of the MVA, and any experiences they have had with homeless students. There is still a lot of information to be collected to benefit school children and their parents affected by this phenomenon. Expanded research could benefit school divisions by providing information to assist in the planning of professional development activities.

Recommended research for the future which emerged from the limitations of this study would include studying homeless education from the viewpoint of children and parents. The recommended research design would be a qualitative case study. I believe an authentic study such as this should be kept to a smaller sample size, such as 10 participants.

This study included a total of 10 participants. It is possible that if purposeful sampling is employed in the future, many more participants could be recruited for participation. For future research, instead of only two school divisions, it would be highly recommended to have at least five school divisions with participants in the research, which was the original vision for this study. It would allow for a larger participant sample. It is still recommended that the same methodology and research design should be used if the sample size is relatively small, meaning 10 participants. However, if the sample size increases significantly, it may be challenging to conduct many personal interviews. Therefore, a quantitative case study, using the McKinney-Vento Act Implementation Scale, a 26-item survey instrument, developed by Canfield et al. (2012) or a similar instrument may prove to be the most efficient means of studying the perceptions and knowledge set of a larger group.

The study was limited to working with the two school divisions willing to provide written permission to conduct research with their personnel. When initially deciding which methods of data collection to use for the study, the use of a survey instrument was considered, but not used.

The MVAIS (Canfield et al., 2012) was the instrument used to study the perceived knowledge and awareness of social workers in the mid-western section of the United States. It was the research found to be most closely related to this study. I contacted Canfield in writing at the University of Cincinnati to discuss this research. He, in return, granted permission in writing to use the MVAIS in this research, if needed. Canfield also expressed an interest in learning the results of this study and possibly pairing with my efforts in the future to fill additional gaps in the literature. Therefore, future research on a shared topic of interest between researchers would be a definite recommendation for future research. A possible topic could be to conduct research at a national education conference and to use the MVAIS to obtain the perceptions of participants with a different career profile than the social workers in the Mid-West.

Summary

In conclusion, the central research question and the two sub-questions were answered throughout the course of this research. Through data collection of interviews, journals and document analysis, triangulation was achieved. The school personnel honestly and openly explained how they described homelessness, to bring closure to the quest for the answer to the first inquiry related to this research. They described their personal experience in working with homeless students in their counseling sessions, as homeless liaisons, while enrolling them or teaching them in classes. Some of the school personnel expressed a feeling of being tested when they were asked during the 10-question open-ended interview to describe their understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act for Homeless Education. The specifics of the law are detailed in Chapter One and a major portion of the actual law, as it relates to the definitions within the law and the role of the homeless liaison are included in Appendix A and Appendix B.

From the research, it was concluded that the theory upon which the research was based,

Burns's (1978) Theory of Transformational Leadership, was the most appropriate theory to

employ for this research. It was fully supported through the answers given by the participants

during interviews and journal entries. In this chapter, the elements of transformational

leadership which appeared to be lacking in both school divisions was also addressed. A question

on the journal entry prompt asked participants to describe their experiences with homeless

students, to describe their personal history working in the field of education and to detail any

professional development opportunities they have had, related to the MVA or homeless students.

The prompt also encouraged participants to write about if they feel their school administrators

appear to take the issue of homelessness seriously. They were told to share as much as they were

comfortable sharing. The specific percentages of all participant replies are in this chapter.

However, based on the statistic that only 3 out of 10 of teachers could identify their school

division's homeless education liaison, and a mere 3 out of 10 could accurately describe any of

the key aspects of the legal definition of homelessness, it is statistically logical to say that both

school divisions could benefit from additional professional development opportunities, in

relation to homeless education and assisting homeless students and their families. All the non-

administrative participants agreed that more professional development was needed in both rural

school divisions. The majority of participants in non-administrative positions believed that the

issue of homelessness was not taken seriously in their respective school divisions.

A major implication of the study was that personnel from both school divisions implied

that the school division administration took homelessness lightly. They did not place the focus

on the topic the faculty and staff felt it deserved.

The theoretical framework used for this study was Burns's (1978) theory of

transformational leadership, which holds the principle that stakeholders, such as school

personnel in rural Central Virginia school divisions, can be connected more to the project at hand as well as the identity of the organization, with the proper leadership. Bass's (1985) enhancement to the theory, known as the elements that constitute a transformational leader, was also discussed. The project at hand in this study, would be homeless education. Based on the repetition of codes derived from interviews, journal entries and themes beginning to emerge from the codes, it was evident that proper leadership and more professional development within the area of homeless education could benefit both school divisions. With the new ESSA mandates, more professional development is now required for homeless education liaisons. This will increase the number of appropriately trained liaisons who can provide accurate information related to homeless education to other school division personnel.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: McKinney-Vento Law-Definitions

 For purposes of this part:

(1) The terms "enroll" and "enrollment" include attending classes and participating fully

   in school activities.

(2) The term "homeless children and youths"—

   (A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence

      (within the meaning of section 11302(a)(1) of this title); and

   (B) includes—

      (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss

      of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels,

      trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate

      accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned

      in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;

      (ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public

         or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping

         accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section

         11302(a)(2)(C) [1] of this title);

      (iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned

         buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

      (iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 6399 of title 20) who

         qualify as homeless for the purposes of this part because the children are

         living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

(3) The terms "local educational agency" and "State educational agency" have the meanings given such terms in section 7801 of title 20.

(4) The term "Secretary" means the Secretary of Education.

(5) The term "State" means each of the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico".

The second definition from United States Code (42 U.S.C. § 11302 et seq.1987 &Supp. 2015). is used by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development when identifying individuals as homeless:

"General definition of homeless individual

(a) In general, for purposes of this chapter, the terms "homeless", "homeless individual", and "homeless person" means-

(1) an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;

(2) an individual or family with a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;

(3) an individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing);

(4) an individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and

who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;

(5) an individual or family who—

    (A) will imminently lose their housing, including housing they own, rent, or live in without paying rent, are sharing with others, and rooms in hotels or motels not paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, as evidenced by—

        (i) a court order resulting from an eviction action that notifies the individual or family that they must leave within 14 days;

        (ii) the individual or family having a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days; or

        (iii) credible evidence indicating that the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days, and any oral statement from an individual or family seeking homeless assistance that is found to be credible shall be considered credible evidence for purposes of this clause;

    (B) has no subsequent residence identified; and

    (C) lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing; and

(6) unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes who—

    (A) have experienced a long term period without living independently in permanent housing,

(B) have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period, and

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

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

(c) Income eligibility

(1) In general - A homeless individual shall be eligible for assistance under any program provided by this chapter, only if the individual complies with the income eligibility requirements otherwise applicable to such program.

(2) Exception - Notwithstanding paragraph (1), a homeless individual shall be eligible for assistance under title I of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act [29 U.S.C. 3111 et seq.].

(d) Exclusion - For purposes of this chapter, the term "homeless" or "homeless

individual" does not include any individual imprisoned or otherwise detained

pursuant to an Act of the Congress or a State law.

(e) Persons experiencing homelessness

Appendix B: McKinney-Vento Definition of Local Homeless Liaison

(6) Local educational agency liaison.--

   (A) Duties.--Each local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youths,

   designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii), shall ensure that--

   (i) homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and

   coordination activities with other entities and agencies;

   (ii) homeless children and youths are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to

   succeed in, schools of that local educational agency;

   (iii) homeless families and homeless children and youths have access to and receive

   educational services for which such families, children, and youths are eligible,

   including services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start

   programs) under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.), early intervention

   services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C.

   1431 et seq.), and other preschool programs administered by the local educational

   agency;

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   (iv) homeless families and homeless children and youths receive referrals to health care

   services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing

   services, and other appropriate services;

   (v) the parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the

   educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with

   meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;

   (vi) public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is

disseminated in locations frequented by parents or guardians of such children and youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths;

(vii) enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with paragraph (3)(E);

(viii) the parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, as described in paragraph (1)(J)(iii), and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school that is selected under paragraph (3)(A);

(ix) school personnel providing services under this subtitle receive professional development and other support; and

(x) unaccompanied youths—

(I) are enrolled in school;

(II) have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards as the State establishes for other children and youth, including through implementation of the procedures under paragraph (1)(F)(ii); and

(III) are informed of their status as independent students under section 480 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087vv) and that the youths may obtain assistance from the local educational agency liaison to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid described in section 483 of such Act (20 U.S.C. 1090).

(B) Notice.--State Coordinators established under subsection (d)(3) and local educational agencies shall inform school personnel, service providers, advocates working with

homeless families, parents and guardians of homeless children and youths, and homeless children and youths of the duties of the local educational agency liaisons, and publish an annually updated list of the liaisons on the State educational agency's website.

(C) Local and state coordination.--Local educational agency liaisons for homeless children and youths shall, as a part of their duties, coordinate and collaborate with State Coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths. Such coordination shall include collecting and providing to the State Coordinator the reliable, valid, and comprehensive data needed to meet the requirements of paragraphs (1) and (3) of subsection (f).

(D) Homeless status.--A local educational agency liaison designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii) who receives training described in subsection (f)(6) may affirm, without further agency action by the Department of Housing and Urban Development, that a child or youth who is eligible for and participating in a program provided by the local educational agency, or the immediate family of such a child or youth, who meets the eligibility requirements of this Act for a program or service authorized under title IV, is eligible for such program or service.

(7) Review and revisions.--

(A) In general.--Each State educational agency and local educational agency that receives assistance under this subtitle shall review and revise any policies that may act as barriers to the identification of homeless children and youths or the enrollment of homeless children and youths in schools that are selected under paragraph (3).

Appendix C: Request to Conduct Research

March 15, 2017

Dr. Sample Superintendent

Sample County Public Schools

00000 Liberty University Boulevard

Lynchburg, VA 22963

Dear Dr. Superintendent,

As a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, I was conducting a study as part of the requirements for a doctor of education degree. The title of my dissertation research project is: Country Road, Take Me Home: A Transcendental Phenomenological Study of Public School personnel in Rural Central Virginia and Their Perception of Homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Act.

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study is to understand how school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts perceive the phenomenon of homelessness and the MVA. At this stage in the research, school personnel included only teachers, school administrators, registrars and homeless liaisons. I was writing to request your permission to seek school personnel within your school district to participate in this study. You are invited to have your school district participate, along with other rural Virginia school divisions. Your division was identified using a pseudonym such as School District A, B, C, D, or E in any publications and participants was identified by pseudonyms.

Participants were asked to schedule an interview with me at their convenience. The participants was requested to write a reflective protocol or journal entry. This information can be used to assist school districts in planning future professional development activities as needed

and serving rural homeless students more effectively. Participants was asked to sign an informed consent information form prior to the research. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary, and participants are welcome to discontinue participation at any time, without penalty.

If you choose to grant permission, please provide a signed statement on your school district's letterhead indicating your approval for this educational research. Your response can be mailed, using the self-addressed, stamped envelope that has been provided for your convenience or e-mailed to the address below. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Cora Peterson Tolliver, Ed. S.

e-mail: ██████@liberty.edu

434-██████

Appendix D: Consent Form

A Transcendental Phenomenology of Public School personnel in Rural Central Virginia and

Their Perception of Homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act

Cora Peterson Tolliver, Ed.S.

Liberty University

School of Education

You are invited to be in a research study about Public School personnel in Rural Central

Virginia and Their Perception of Homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education

Act. You were selected as a possible participant because you are a school employee who may

have direct interaction with students and are in a position to report homelessness. Specifically,

building administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, guidance counselors, and administrative

office staff are needed to participate in the study.

I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in

the study. Cora Peterson Tolliver, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty

University, is conducting this study.

Background Information: The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study

is to understand how school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts perceive the

phenomenon of homelessness and the MVA.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I will ask you to do the following things:

• Complete a brief questionnaire e-mailed to you. This will determine if you meet the

criteria for personnel to participate in this study.

• Participate in an individual interview via phone or in-person. You was contacted either

by e-mail or phone to arrange the interview. Your time is valuable, and therefore, the interview

was scheduled at a time that is convenient for your schedule. The interview will last

approximately 30-45 minutes, unless the participant has additional information to share. The

topic was your personal perception of homelessness. During the interviewing, I would like to

learn about any training or information you have had, related to homelessness from your school

division or if you feel there is a need for more information

- The study will include a journaling activity. You will be given a writing prompt.

However, you can choose to share your experiences beyond the realm of the writing prompt to

include observations you note in your school, classrooms and school district, related to rural

homelessness. You will be contacted by e-mail or phone with specific information about the

journaling activity. A journaling prompt is simply a starting point for your writing. Your

identity will be protected using a pseudonym.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

All studies carry a risk; however, the risks for this study was minimal and was no more

than the participant would encounter in everyday life. All steps have been taken to protect your

identity, and there should be no misuse of any information.

Compensation:

There was no monetary compensation for participation in this study.

Voluntary nature of the study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your current or future relationship with

Liberty University or the researcher will not be affected. You are free to not to answer any

question or to withdraw at any time if you decide to participate, without affecting those

relationships.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study was kept private. In any sort of report published, will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a participant. Research records was stored securely at the researcher's residence, and only the researcher will have access to the records. The research records and results of the study may be used in subsequent studies of a similar nature.

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is: Cora Peterson Tolliver. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact me at (434)-547-2814, or charris17@liberty.edu. You may also contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Joan Fitzpatrick at jfitzpatrick@liberty.edu.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to speak to someone other than the researcher(s), **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, CN Suite 1582, 1971 University Blvd, Lynchburg, VA 24502 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

◯ I have read the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers.

◯ I consent to participate in the study.

Signature:_____ Date:_____

Signature of Researcher: _____Date:_____

Appendix E: Journaling Prompt

Please reflect upon your current role in your school district, the length of your employment, any professional development activities you have attended related to homeless education or the identification of students experiencing homelessness. Also, reflect upon your prior knowledge of students experiencing homelessness in your community, both now and prior to any formal training.

Do you believe homelessness is considered to be a serious issue in your school community and has there been an appropriate amount of attention brought to the issue? Lastly, please discuss any specific cases of homelessness you have heard about, related to students in your school, and if the students benefited from any aspect of the McKinney-Vento Act. Thank you for sharing your thoughts through this journaling activity.

Please contribute as much information as you feel comfortable sharing. All information will be kept confidential and a pseudonym will be used in place of your name and the name of your school district.

Appendix F: IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY.
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

March 12, 2018

Cora Peterson Tolliver
IRB Approval 3039.031218: Country Road, Take Me Home: A Transcendental
Phenomenological Study of Public School Personnel in Rural Central Virginia and Their
Perception of Homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act

Dear Cora Peterson Tolliver,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty University IRB.
This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol
number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as
it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms
for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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Appendix G: Research Questions/Interview Questions Matrix

(An "X" has been placed under the related research question that is addressed by the interview

question.)

Interview Questions	Relates to Central Question	Relates to Sub-Question #1	Research Sub-Question #2
Tell me about yourself? How would you describe the demographics of your school?	How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts, describe homelessness?	How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe their experience with homeless students?	How do school personnel in two rural Virginia school districts describe their understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act?
How do you describe homelessness?	X		
How do you believe homelessness looks in rural Virginia?	X		X
What types of experiences have you had with students experiencing homelessness in your school district?		X	
What professional training do you attribute to your knowledge of homelessness?			X
How would you describe the McKinney-Vento Act?	X		X

What professional training do you attribute to your knowledge of the McKinney-Vento Act?	X		X
What provisions are afforded to students experiencing homelessness in your school division?			X
Please tell me about any materials you have been given from your school district, related to homelessness.	X		X
What are some of the aspects of the legal definition of homelessness?	X		X
Please tell me about any time you have had to report homelessness or suspected homelessness.		X	

Appendix H: Statement of Confidentiality

Name of Project: A Transcendental Phenomenology of Public School personnel in Rural Central Virginia and Their Perception of Homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act

Principal Researcher: Cora Peterson Tolliver

██████████████████████████████████

Institution: Liberty University Lynchburg, VA College of Education

The researcher will make every effort to protect the confidentiality and identity of all participants in the above-named study. This includes parents, students, and the target school and system. All information, electronic or otherwise, was safely secured either by locked cabinet or password-protected.

The names of participants will not be used in the data collection process or in the final report, but was changed to pseudonyms. All identifying information on all student records and surveys completed by participants was removed. No names of teachers, schools or the system was mentioned in the final report.

Principal Researcher Signature:_____ Date:_____

Participant Signature: _____ Date:_____

Appendix I: Sample of Information on NCHE Homeless Education Poster

Your eligible children have the right to:

- Receive a free, appropriate public education.

- Enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment.

- Enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents.

- Enroll in the local school; or continue attending their school of origin (the school they attended when permanently housed or the school in which they were last enrolled), if that is your preference.

  * If the school district believes that the school you select is not in the best interest of your children, then the district must provide you with a written explanation of its position and inform you of your right to appeal its decision.

- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if you request this.

- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to your children's needs.

If you believe your children may be eligible, contact the local liaison to find out what services and supports may be available. There also may be supports available for your preschool-age children.

Local Liaison	State Coordinator

If you need further assistance with your children's educational needs, contact the National Center for Homeless Education:
1-800-308-2145 ★ homeless@serve.org ★ http://nche.ed.gov

Appendix J: Sample of Information on NCHE Homeless Education Brochure

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act defines the term "homeless children and youths" as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including

i. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;

ii. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

iii. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

iv. migratory children who qualify as

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, homeless children and youth have the right to

‣ receive a free, appropriate public education.

‣ enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment.

‣ enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents.

‣ enroll in the local school; or continue attending the school of origin (the school they attended when permanently housed or the school in which they were last enrolled), according to each student's best interest.

* If the school district believes that the school selected is not in the student's best interest, the district must provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its position and inform the parent, guardian, or youth of the right to appeal its decision.

‣ receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested.

‣ receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to each student's needs.

Supporting the Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness